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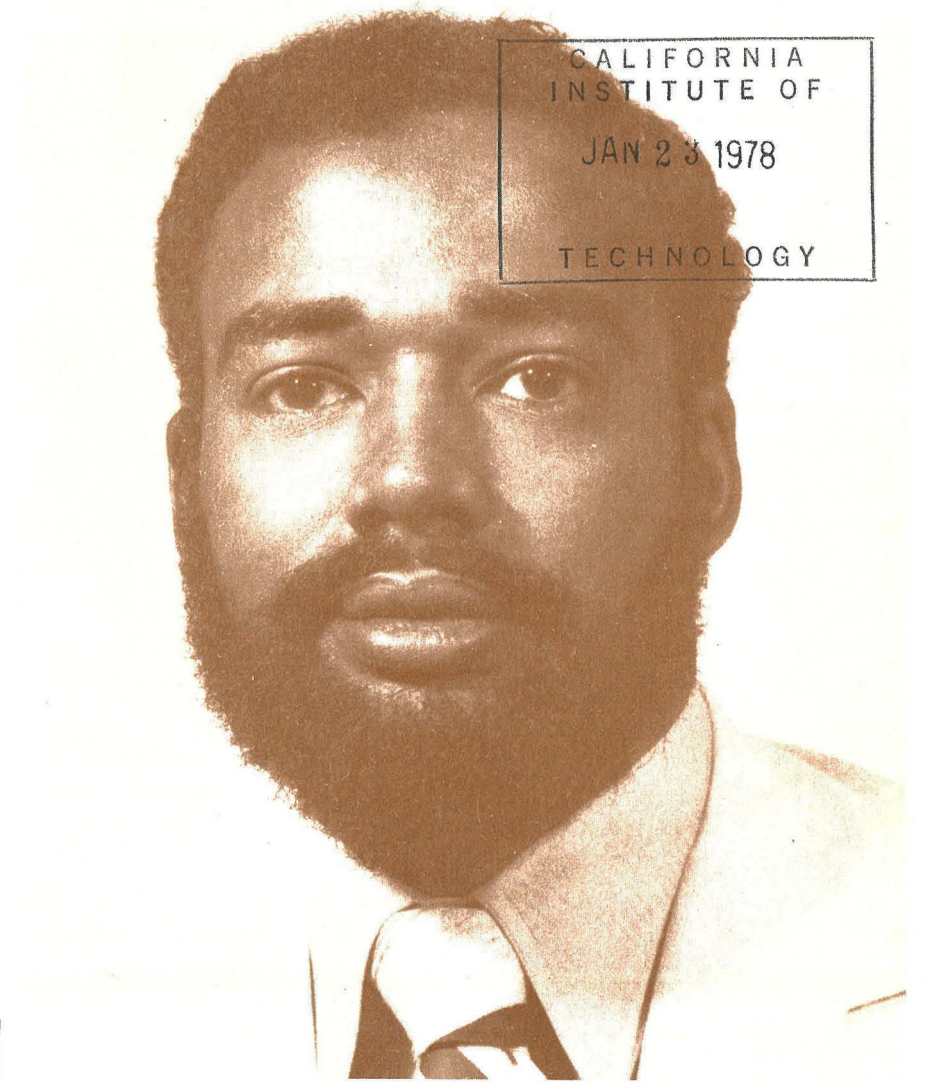
# Munger Africana Library Notes







Savimbi's 1977 Campaign Against the Cubans and MPLA — Observed for 7½ Months, and Covering 2,100 Miles Inside Angola

Leon De Costa Dash, Jr.

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## Savimbi's 1977 Campaign Against the Cubans and MPLA — Observed for 7½ Months, and Covering 2,100 Miles Inside Angola

Leon De Costa Dash, Jr.

Photographs by
Leon De Costa Dash, Jr.,
Courtesy of Mr. Dash and
*The Washington Post*



*Cover Illustration:* Mr. Dash

## Editor's Introduction

Leon De Costa Dash, Jr. is an intrepid reporter. He has undertaken, at no small personal risk, three lengthy visits to Angola: from June to September, 1973, with UNITA; from May to July, 1974, with the Portuguese, following the coup of April 25 that year; and for seven months earlier this year, again with UNITA.

His reportorial achievements have been recognized with the First Prize in International Reporting of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild in 1974; the George Polk Memorial Award of the Overseas Press Club in 1973; and Honorable Mention in 1972 in the Robert F. Kennedy Awards for Outstanding Coverage of the Disadvantaged.

Foot safaris under difficult and dangerous conditions have a long tradition for American reporters. Henry Morton Stanley was a special correspondent with British troops in Ethiopia on assignment from the New York Herald in 1868, and, after finding a presumably lost missionary, became a much-feted explorer.

The last decade has witnessed brilliant journalism in Africa. Basil Davidson reported in the sixth issue of this publication on his hazardous trek in 1970 with the MPLA in eastern Angola. In addition to his contributions in the British press, he wrote in the New Statesman. He is, of course, widely admired for his books on African civilizations.

Stanley Meisler of the Los Angeles Times Foreign Service prepared himself with academic studies for his work in Africa. During his African years the Los Angeles Times carried more front page stories on Africa than did the New York Times or the Washington Post.

Robin Wright of the Christian Science Monitor, and later of CBS News and the Washington Post, braved repeated danger on both sides in the Angolan war and in Mozambique and Rhodesia. She survived grim imprisonment and the threat of execution in Angola and continues to report on southern Africa.

Leon Dash was born in the small New England town of New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1944. Shortly thereafter, when his father returned from active duty in Europe, the family moved to New York's East Harlem. He went to public school there through the ninth grade, then transferred to the Rhodes School, from which he received his high school diploma in 1961. Mr. Dash then began college work at the Baruch School of Business of the City University of New York, and recalls "hating every minute of it."

In the fall of 1962 he enrolled afresh at Lincoln University. He was influenced to attend Lincoln through the late Reverend James Robinson, who played a key role for three decades in sparking an interest in Africa among both black and white Americans. In 1947, Reverend Robinson told me in New York of his driving ambition to change the image of Africa as the "Dark Continent" in the minds of Americans. His chief, but by no means only, instrument was and remains "Crossroads Africa," a program that has encouraged and helped thousands of young Americans to spend a working summer in Africa. Leon Dash was one young American who was inspired to learn about Africa in Robinson's own Church of the Master in Harlem. Mr. Dash's mother was a close friend of Mrs. Robinson and so the Robinsons kept in touch with the young student as his interests did gravitate to Africa.

Our author spent two and a half years at Lincoln, majoring in English, editing The Lincolnian and being a "civil rights activist and rabble rouser," to use his words.

In the fall of 1965, Dash transferred to Howard University and changed his major to history, with a minor in political science. To help support himself at Howard, he first worked nights steamcleaning buildings and later became a copyboy on the Washington Post. In 1966 he was elevated to reporter, and covered police stories at night until his graduation from Howard in 1968.

The following two years, Dash had a leave of absence from the Post to be a Peace Corps volunteer, teaching geography and history in a two-room high school in the Nandi village of Kilibwoni on the western wall of Kenya's Rift Valley. While serving in the Harambee school, he learned

fluent Kiswahili and some Nandi.

In 1968 Dash covered the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Since 1971, Dash has been a general assignment reporter with the Washington Post. His beats have included police, prisons, local politics, environmental problems, black power militants, and civil rights. He is the co-author (with Ben Badikan) of a book, The Shame of Prisons, published by Simon and Schuster in 1972.

This issue of the Notes consists of his reports and his photographs, originally published in the Washington Post. They constitute a unique documentation of the continuing civil war in Angola and provide a fresh assessment of Jonas Savimbi and his predominately Ovimbundu supporters. I was in southern Angola briefly in 1976 when the UNITA forces had been driven back from the gates of Luanda by the MPLA with the absolutely critical assistance of Cuban troops and Soviet arms. As I talked with dispirited and defeated UNITA soldiers, it appeared that only a mopping up by the Luanda regime was needed. The UNITA troops were confident that if they could match the long-range artillery, rocket launchers, and Migs of the MPLA's foreign allies, then they would be victorious. But the rapid withdrawal of the South African army, the cessation of American arms supplies (which came in mostly through France and Germany and then through Zaire and Zambia), and the virtual withdrawal of support from so-called moderate African states, seemed to presage final defeat.

But it has yet to happen. The Cuban strength has seemingly increased to over 20,000 rather than declined. Repeatedly, the UNITA forces in the bush have cut the rail line, have ambushed patrols and captured Soviet weapons, and have even managed to shoot down at least one plane. Information on guerrilla fighting is always sketchy and usually inaccurate. What is so impressive about the Dash reports is that they are based on what he himself saw as he traveled arduously, and faced imminent danger through southeastern Angola. Time will almost certainly reveal a great deal about the machinations of other powers, both African and foreign, in supplying the various Angolan factions in 1977, but this is the most objective and definitive account to date by an experienced journalist of life with

UNITA inside Angola in 1977.

We are grateful to Richard Harwood, Deputy Managing Editor of the Washington Post (the copyright owner of Mr. Dash's original reports) and of course to Leon Dash, for permission to bring to our subscribers these fruits of an outstanding journalistic accomplishment.

E.S.M.

MUNGO, Angola -- The 25-man guerrilla band opened fire at 5:40 a.m. with automatic rifles and mortars, immediately killing the two careless sentries who had been smoking cigarettes as they patrolled the town's northern edge.

The dawn attack awoke Mungo's 100 government soldiers. They poured out of their houses, firing toward the flashes from the bush where the guerrillas were hidden, their positions dim in the half-light.

Quietly, 125 more guerrillas slipped up behind the government soldiers from the south and opened fire at their backs. Half of the defenders turned and moved cautiously south to meet this unexpected threat. They were walking into a trap.

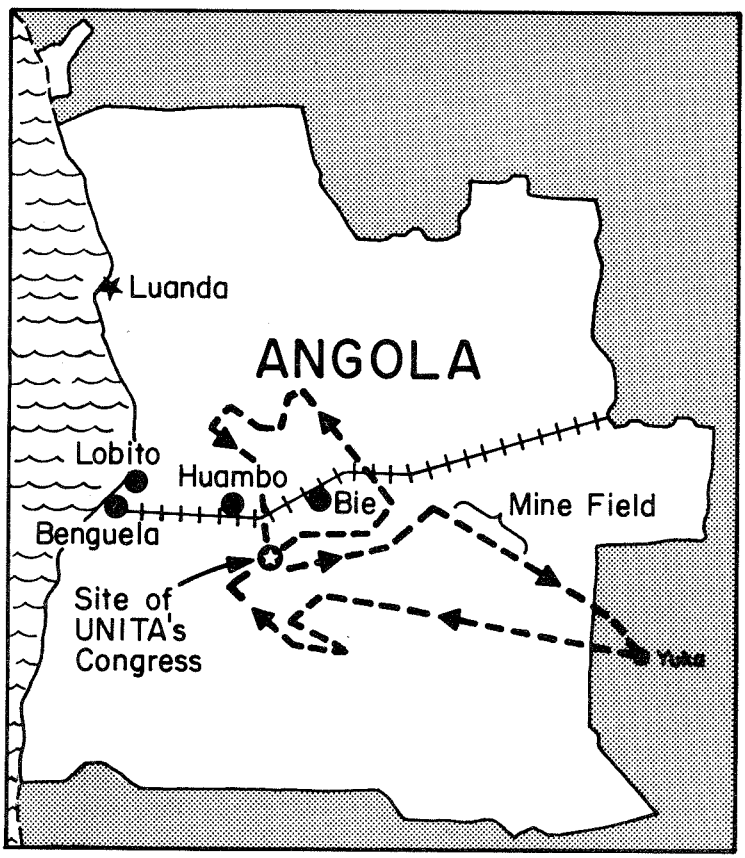
The original 25 attackers abruptly broke off their firing and ran around to join 100 more guerrillas lying silently in the grass on the town's eastern side. Rising in unison, this group filtered noiselessly into the town without firing. The trap was beginning to close.

The guerrillas glided around the houses to link up in an L with their comrades moving in from the south. Now the 100 government troops were hit from their southern and eastern flanks by the vicious crossfire of 250 guerrillas. The trap was closed.

It had taken the guerrillas -- fighters for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) four minutes to maneuver the soldiers of the Popular Movement government, into the trap. The UNITA guerrillas, who rarely take prisoners, wanted to kill all of the government soldiers and then destroy the town.

It was February 9, which dawned gray and cloudy over Mungo, a town in Huambo Province, in the center of Angola, at the foot of the twin Bangombali Mountains. I was on the eastern twin of the two mountains, half a mile away from the attack.

Five months earlier, I had slipped into Angola -- a newly independent African country in the throes of civil




Dash's 2,100-mile trip with UNITA forces in Angola

war -- at the invitation of UNITA for a close-up but one-sided look at the war. From the time I walked across the Angolan border October 4, until I recrossed it back into Zambia May 22, I traveled 2,100 miles on foot through the UNITA-occupied areas of southern Angola.

Traveling through five provinces -- Moxico, Cuando Cubango, Huila, Bie and Huambo -- I concluded that the UNITA guerrillas effectively occupy the southern half of Angola, an area the size of Texas.

The attack I watched -- the sixth raid on Mungo since April 1976, the guerrillas claimed -- showed how fiercely Angola is being fought over.

UNITA's guerrillas, too weak to face the Popular Movement troops head-on, rely on surprise, maneuver and massing at least twice as many troops as the government garrison they are trying to overrun. When attacked, the guerrillas fade into the bush of southern Angola, about 240,000 square miles of forest and grassland savanna. This war could go on indefinitely.

The battle for Mungo also shows how the Cold War adversaries, the United States and the Soviet Union, have been drawn into feeding the arms race in Angola.

As the steady clatter of automatic rifles rattled through Mungo, I climbed down the mountain with two UNITA majors and 50 guerrillas to get a closer look at the fighting.

The guerrillas were using American mortars, Belgian automatics, American M-79 grenade launchers and M-1 World War II-vintage American carbines provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in June 1975. Ironically, they also had Kalashnikov automatic assault rifles they had received in May 1975 from Romania, the Soviet-bloc country that acts independently of Moscow.

The government soldiers also had Kalashnikovs, plus Soviet-made mortars and rocket launchers, as well as Portuguese G-3 automatics given them by the since-departed

Portuguese army.

The Soviets had sent the Marxist-oriented Popular Movement a large shipment of arms in early 1975, when it became clear that there would be a struggle for power in newly independent Angola. Cuba's Fidel Castro sent some 15,000 of his troops to aid the Popular Movement.

UNITA and a third movement, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, were aided by the CIA because their leaders are anti-Communist. In the early stages, both UNITA and the National Front were also aided by South African troops and by mercenaries.

The Cubans are still in Angola, but the South Africans retreated and the mercenaries, some of whom were captured and tried by the Popular Movement government, fled.

After descending the mountain, we crossed over a log bridge spanning a forked river that ran west, just south of town.

The noise of the exploding rockets and mortars was deafening as we approached from the west. Above the din, I could hear the deep, periodic cough of the UNITA guerrillas' American Browning machine gun captured from the National Front in one of the clashes that had marked the supposed coalition between the two movements. The National Front, in turn, had gotten the gun from the CIA.

Suddenly, in the dim light, we saw a group of peasants running from the southern end of the town -- civilians who had been accused by the government of supporting UNITA and jailed to await execution. The guerrillas had released them.

"That means our men have reached the center of Mungo," said UNITA Maj. David (Wenda) Catata. "I don't know if all of them were our supporters," he continued as the men ran to the river and filed across the log bridge, "but they are now."

As we moved into the forest, we met two guerrillas

who had deserted the battle. Maj. Arao Chingufo angrily ordered them to halt, chewed them out and put them at the head of our group as we all moved closer to the town, where the fighting was still going on.

It was almost 7 a.m., and the sounds of battle were shifting back to the town's northern edge. The rifle fire and machine-gun bursts were shorter, with long pauses occasionally. The rocket and mortar explosions had stopped.

Eager for a closer look, I was drawn toward the sound of the guns. The foliage grew thinner as we came into sight of the town's whitewashed buildings and orange, clay-tile roofs.

There was a sudden burst of gunfire. "House-to-house fighting," Maj. Chingufo surmised, and insisted that we wait 10 minutes before moving onto the open ground between the forest and the town.

As we began to move forward again, a sudden movement in the brush ahead made us all drop to one knee. It was two guerrillas carrying a wounded comrade.

"Go back, go back!" the two shouted at us. Drawing closer, they told us that government reinforcements had arrived minutes before and chased the guerrillas out of town. The renewed gunfire was not house-to-house fighting, but the guerrillas covering their own retreat. We had almost walked into the government's lap.

"Turn around and walk back," Chingufo told me. "We will not have to run -- the government soldiers will not leave the town."

His confidence proved justified. After a 15-minute walk we were back on the floodplain, bathed in early-morning sunlight and in full view of the town. Recrossing the river, we continued at a slow gait for half an hour. The troops did not pursue us.

Later, the guerrillas said they had killed almost

half the defending troops and pushed the remainder out of the northern edge of town before the reinforcements arrived from Andulo, a town northeast of Mungo.

Apparently overconfident, Maj. Chingufo had failed to lay ambushes on the roads into town -- one of the guerrillas' main battle rules. This allowed the government reinforcements to come into Mungo unchallenged.

The oversight had cost the guerrillas the secondary gain usually sought: the capture of arms and ammunition. It had also left us all exposed -- only the soldiers' display of poor morale in not pursuing the guerrilla attackers had saved us from being trapped.

The guerrillas were content, however, when they compared their casualities -- three wounded -- to the claimed kill of 50 persons: 42 Popular Movement soldiers, seven of their wives, killed when a guerrilla mortar hit the house they were hiding in; and an unarmed civilian militiaman.

Inflicting heavy casualities to weaken the government troops' morale, destroying towns to prevent their return and freeing UNITA supporters from jails are the guerrillas' primary goals.

During my trip, I passed through several towns flattened by guerrillas using log battering rams; Popular Movement troops had also destroyed innumerable villages in retaliation against peasant support for the guerrillas.

At the heart of the conflict are the tribal and regional bonds that divide Angola, a country of more than 5 million people on Africa'a southwestern Atlantic coast, into three distinct areas: north, central and south. These distinctions existed before the Portuguese came in the sixteenth century and they sparked the fratricidal war that remained when the Portuguese left in 1975.

In this, Angola is like virtually all of Africa's newly independent nations, where allegiance to the national government is secondary to the loyalties owed the tribe,

its clans, its hereditary leaders, its separate history and its well-being. Throughout the continent, perceptions -- accurate or baseless -- of a threat to a tribe's well-being have set off innumerable rebellions or attempts at secession.

Angola's Marxist-oriented Popular Movement government has not even been able to start promoting national unity. The country's current civil war began before the state gained independence two years ago.

Angola has an additional hurdle: a substantial part of the black population resents the highly visible whites and Angolan mesticos (Portuguese for a person of mixed black and white descent) who run the Communist government. This resentment is a holdover from colonial days, when Portuguese whites and mesticos held privileged positions in Angola.

On top of these deep ethnic antagonisms are the conflicting ideologies of the warring leaders, whose beliefs have been used to label their followers with such words -- meaningless locally -- as Communists, Socialists, pro-Soviet and pro-Western. The tribally divided followers of the warring factions understand little or nothing of the political labels others give them.

Angola's three rival groups -- the Popular Movement, UNITA and the National Front -- had fought a guerrilla-style war against their former colonial masters, at separate times, since 1961. During the 15 years between then and the time the Portuguese left, the three had also fought and killed one another.

In 1975 three movements formed a shaky coalition government that quickly collapsed, leaving the fighting that continues today.

The Popular Movement won, aided by the 15,000-man Cuban force and Soviet Migs, the devastating 122mm. "Stalin Organ" missile launchers and T-34 and T-54 tanks. The Popular Movement was also aided by Katangan gendarmes, who had fled Zaire in the mid-1960s and had served as a counter-insurgency force for the Portuguese against all three movements.

In March, these same gendarmes invaded Zaire from Angola.

After their initial defeat in 1976, UNITA's guerrillas retreated into the forests of southern Angola to wage a war of attrition, sabotage, economic disruption and terrorism against the Popular Movement and its allies.

UNITA's main support comes from the Ovimbundo, the country's largest tribe -- a third of Angola's 5.3 million blacks. UNITA leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, a Socialist, is an Ovimbundo who appeals across tribal lines to the other peoples of the south. All told, the area where UNITA guerrillas operate holds half the country's population.

The National Front, after being routed by Cuban regular troops in late 1970, fled from its northern stronghold among the Bakongo people -- who make up 25 percent of Angola's population -- into neighboring Zaire. The Front's anti-communist leader, Holden Roberto, a Bakongo, claims to have guerrillas operating in northern Angola today.

The victorious Popular Movement, headed by Marxist Agostinho Neto, has the support of his Kimbundo tribe in northern Angola (another 25 percent of the population) as well as of the country's black, mestico and white minority of urban intellectuals.

The Popular Movement government's influence is now limited to the Kimbundo tribal areas (of secondary economic importance) and to Angola's cities and some towns. Its Cuban allies have evacuated the countryside, where their heavy Soviet armaments are unsuited to counter-insurgency.

This was my second trip with the UNITA guerrillas; in the summer of 1973, I spent 10 weeks with them and covered 800 miles on foot in Angola's sparsely populated and economically unimportant eastern regions.

Then the guerrillas were battling the Portuguese, but were also constantly clashing with the equally anti-Portuguese guerrillas of the other two movements, considerably weakening the anticolonial struggle and foreshadowing today's civil war.

This time I arrived in Yuka, Zambia, at the end of September and was hidden under a dome-shaped granary by UNITA underground workers for two nights to avoid being spotted by police authorities.

I started my hike to the Angolan border the night of October 2. After two nights of walking through thunderstorms across the western Zambian plain, I was guided to a border rendezvous with the UNITA guerrillas. Then, with an escort of 100, I headed northwest into the Angolan interior. We had easily managed to avoid Zambian army patrols simply by walking at night, while the soldiers slept.

Our first obstacle was the Ninda River swamp, where we stripped off all our clothes before moving slowly through the tangle of mangrove tree roots and thick bunches or razor-sharp grass.

The crossing took two hours in nearly waist-high water, leaving our legs, arms and hands covered with tiny cuts that streamed blood. "It takes tough men to live in these conditions," said UNITA Col. Smart Chata, "and that's why it will be difficult for the [government] to defeat us. Their soldiers don't like to come into these areas."

Wiping blood from my legs, I grunted agreement. Chata is one of several UNITA guerrillas who speaks English. I talked with others in Swahili, which I learned while serving as a Peace Corps high school teacher in Kenya, and I also speak and understand a little Portuguese, the colonial language of Angola.

After the swamp, we walked for three hours to the nearest guerrilla base, deep in the forest of Moxico Province.

The guerrillas' bases are all built similarly, with the grass huts scattered under trees for cover. The green canopy keeps the camps from being spotted by the occasional single-engine reconnaissance planes the government uses. In the camps live female guerrillas and children--some of the men have their entire families with them. The children begin military training as soon as they can walk.

Infant Neto Dash, in the arms of his malnourished mother, was not expected to live. He was named for two visitors at the camp where he was born.

From this camp we headed due west through thick forest, dense bush, murky swamps and swollen rivers. The swamps and rivers were always the most difficult part, for most of the guerrillas could not swim and had to be ferried across in small canoes made of bark, which took hours.

During one hour-long crossing in a log canoe, a swamp leech attached itself, unnoticed, to my left ankle. When I reached firm ground, the leech's blood-bloated body began to flap around as I walked. A guerrilla deftly cut the leech from my ankle with his knife and tossed it, matter-of-factly, back into the river. The perforated spot on my ankle continued to bleed, painlessly, for half an hour.

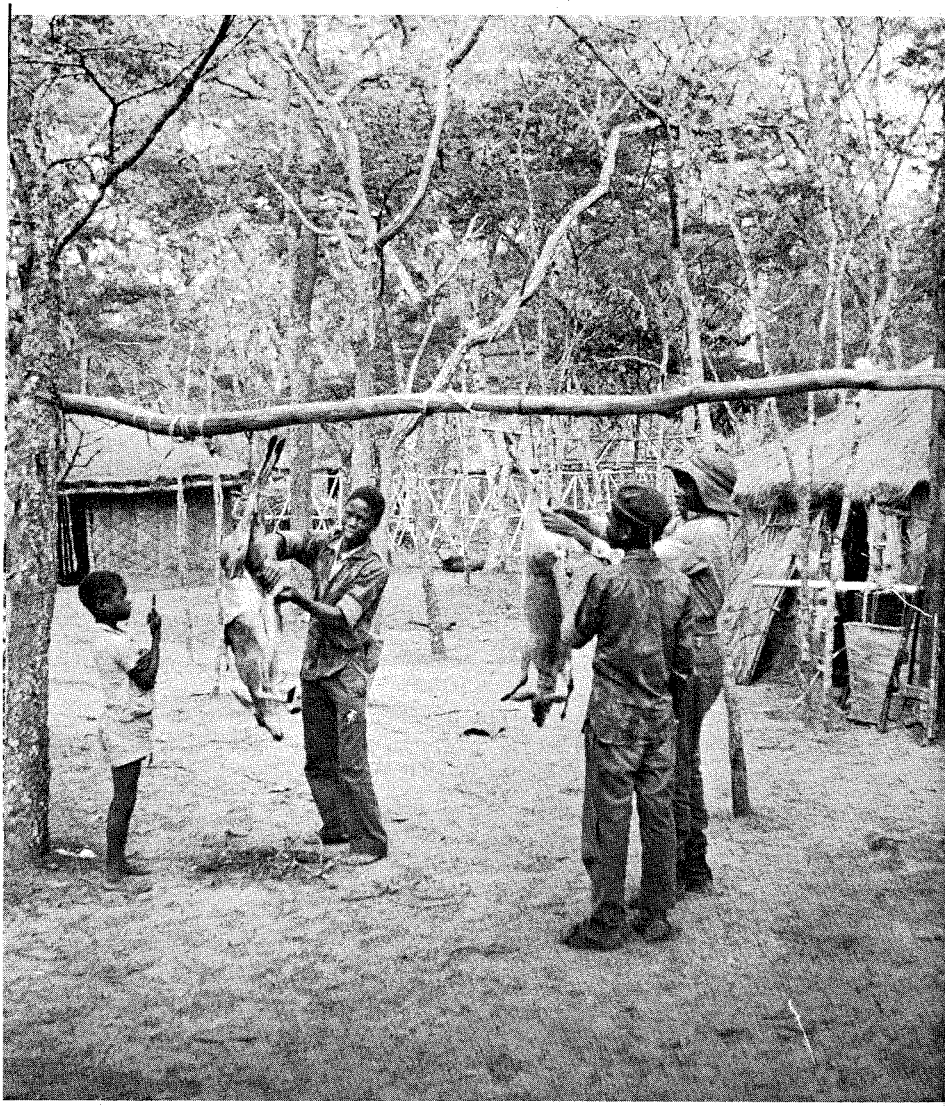
On October 13, we reached the base of Capt. Magalhaes Francisco. Fifteen minutes before we got there, a baby boy was born, and in a traditional African manner of marking events, the baby was named Neto Dash -- after me and my guerrilla escort, Capt. Neto Epalanga.

The baby was not expected to live, however. His mother, undernourished, had no milk. The only food available in the semi-arid regions of Moxico Province was wild honey and antelope meat.

Three days later, hiking through the forest south of Muie, we came across a rusted cache of Soviet shoulder rockets, mortars, handguns and rifles. The UNITA guerrillas said the arms had been hidden by Popular Movement guerrillas who operated in this area during the war against the Portuguese. The area where Angola's present rulers once were based has now passed to their opponents.

The cache was left undisturbed on the chance that it might have been booby-trapped, and we pushed on west. I was eager to reach the base of UNITA leader Savimbi; all the guerrillas would tell me, at this point in the center of Moxico Province, was that we "still had a long way to go."

We had started walking at an average of 15 miles a day, to give me time to get used to the pace, but by October 28, when we reached Lt. Col. Charles Kandanda's base



UNITA guerrillas skin small antelopes,
their staple food in eastern Angola.

in Cuando Cubango Province, we were doing 25 miles a day.

Here the food situation was a little better, and -- besides honey and antelope -- we ate roasted corn, river catfish and honey-coated bee larvae. The taste of the bee larve was smothered by the honey.

Three days later, the rainy season arrived at 1:30 a.m. with a loud thunderclap. I had been sleeping in the woods near a campfire. The thunderclap that woke me was quickly followed by a downpour that doused the fire.

A shiver-producing wetness and cold pentrated all our clothes, but the guerrillas simply leaned up against the trees and went back to sleep seated on their rolled-up blankets. I tried to sleep in the same fashion, but wasn't able to. The rain fell all that morning.

We were always caught in rainstorms in the long distances between bases, and it took me two weeks to get used to sleeping in the rain. By the time the rains ended in April, the thunder, lighting and rain would not even wake me after a long day's march.

Three days after the first rainstorm, we came across 23 foxholes dug into the west bank of a river. Lt. Isak Martins said Popular Movement and Cuban soldiers had waited in ambush here for the UNITA guerrillas the previous August. The site was littered with empty cans bearing the labels of Salva brand Russian stewed beef and Koo brand South African green peas.

"They knew that Savimbi was due to pass here" Martins said, "but we knew they were here and passed through another river valley north of here."

Half an hour's walk from the first ambush site, we came across another, where Portuguese soldiers had waited for the guerrillas to pass during the anti-colonial war. The rusty army ration cans had been there since 1974, Martins said.

"We have fought many enemies," he laughed. "First

the Portuguese and now the Popular Movement and the Cubans. I don't know when the fighting will stop."

On November 8, we reached a large UNITA base of 200 guerrillas, where Kawendima Chipipa, a guerrilla political organizer, informed me that Jimmy Carter had been elected President of the United States. Chipipa had heard the news six days before, on the Voice of America.

The sharp swamp grass had left cuts on both my legs. They had stubbornly refused to heal, and I had several large running sores. I was forced to wait at this base for four days, until hard scabs formed.

While I was waiting, the guerrillas held an Angolan independence festival in the bush, celebrating the first anniversary of the end of Portuguese rule, November 11.

A large T-shaped table was built from saplings. The women dished out huge helpings of boiled antelope meat and mounds of boiled corn meal, which had the consistency of bread dough.

That night there was a dance under the trees, with married and unmarried female guerrillas mingling with men on the dusty earth dance floor. A truck battery, captured in an ambush against government forces the week before powered the guerrillas' phonograph, which ground out Zairian and Angolan music that I found monotonous. No one else seemed to share this feeling, however, for the dance went on until dawn, when it was ended by a cloudburst.

"We consider ourselves independent from the Portuguese," said political organizer Chipipa, "but we are fighting against a new colonizer, the Soviet Union and their Cuban lackeys."

KAVANGO, Angola -- The stench choked me as the wind shifted suddenly, carrying the smell of dead cattle to the eastern edge of this burnt and deserted village.

Chief Jacinto Seven guided me and an escort of 50 guerrillas past the 45 dead cows. Several small, mangy dogs scampered away from the decaying, partially eaten carcasses as we passed by.

A short distance away, Chief Seven pointed to the scattered bones of a leper sticking up from the red mud -- symbols of the savage, fratricidal civil war that has torn the southern half of this newly independent African nation for the past two years.

"He and the other lepers were too weak to run when the government soldiers came here," said Seven, chief of the now-deserted village of 300 peasants.

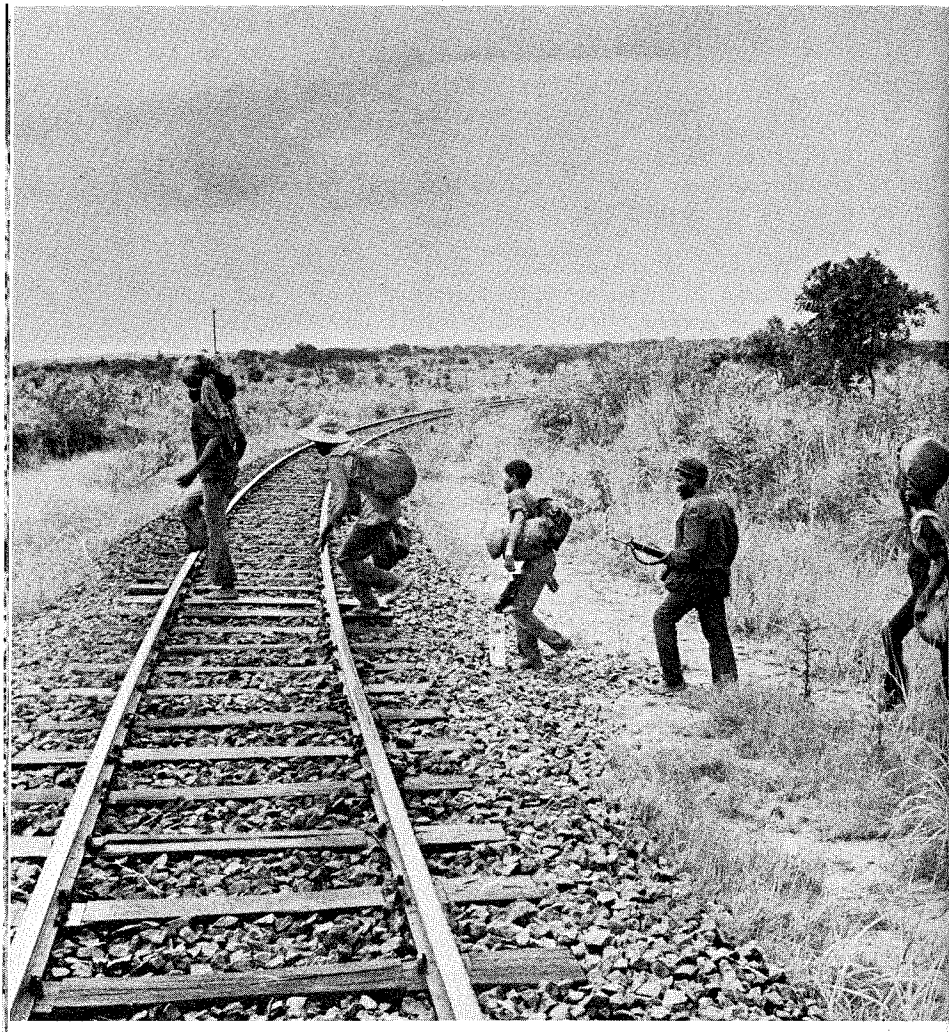
"The soldiers burned him and another leper alive," Seven continued unemotionally while pointing to the dead man's jawbone, a thighbone and a forearm lying among the fast-growing weeds in front of the dead man's fire blackened house.

That was all that was left of the skeleton. Dogs and other small, carnivorous animals had gorged themselves on the diseased flesh, gnawed the edges of the remaining bones and carried the rest off into the surrounding forest.

"The soldiers threw another man down a well and shot the other nine," Seven said. "It was the fifth time they had come here, but the first time they had done this. They were angry because we support the guerrillas."

The guerrillas, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), have been fighting a fierce, protracted war against the Soviet- and Cuban-supported government of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. The Movement won a three-sided conflict against UNITA and another rival, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, during the early stages of the war.

The Angolan government is supported by some 15,000



Guerrilla fighters of UNITA file across Angola's Benguela Railroad.

Cuban soldiers, Katangan gendarmes and the guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). The guerrillas claim they have also fought against Nigerian regular soldiers who, according to newspaper accounts earlier this year, were in Angola at "battalion strength," but the guerrillas could offer me no proof.

Today the UNITA guerrillas are better armed and organized and occupy better strategic locations than when they fought the 69,000-man Portuguese colonial army from 1966 to 1974. They have also grown considerably from a claimed high of 3,000 guerrillas in 1974 up to 23,000 today, according to their commander general, Samuel Chiwale.

From the intensive look that I got at UNITA's operations, Chiwale's claim of 23,000 guerrillas seemed credible.

The UNITA guerrillas were also given some tactical training by 20 French mercenaries flown into Angola in mid-January 1976 on a six-month Central Intelligence Agency contract. The 20 men did not serve out their contract and left Angola through Namibia in mid-March, according to an authoritative Western intelligence source.

On my previous visit to the UNITA insurgents in 1973, they were limited to the sparsely populated and economically unimportant regions east of the Cuanza River, which flows north through the center of southern Angola.

The UNITA guerrillas now occupy Angola's most heavily populated and economically essential central plateau, west of the Cuanza River, both north and south of the Benguela railroad. The train's iron rails run 840 miles, from the Atlantic east to the Zaire border. The Benguela railroad divides Angola into its northern and southern regions.

Since their retreat from the cities just ahead of the Cuban forces in February and March of last year, the UNITA guerrillas have been fighting from the Benguela railroad south to Angola's border with Namibia -- a region of approximately 240,000 square miles. They have followed strickly the Maoist tenets of guerrilla warfare taught to the

first 11 UNITA rebels trained in Peking in 1965. They are:

> Engage government troops only when you have massed twice their number of soldiers or more, to kill as many as possible and demoralize the army by never giving them a victory.
>
> Destroy all means of communications, make road transportation unsafe with numerous ambushes and destroy all railroads.
>
> Sabotage the economy and create psychological instability among the civilian population that supports the government through acts of urban terrorism.
>
> Disperse when attacked by large government forces, causing frustrated government soldiers to retaliate against the civilian population and thereby cement the ties between peasant supporter and guerrilla.

I saw how effectively the UNITA guerrillas have been able to cut road transportation when, in March, I went with them on an ambush on the asphalt road running through central Angola south from Bie (formerly Silva Porto) to Serpa Pinto.

With 60 guerrillas -- 12 men for each vehicle of a five-truck convoy that they said usually traveled the road -- strung out along the road I waited for eight days and eight nights just above the town of Cachingues. But nothing moved all week -- this in a country whose few asphalt roads were used incessantly before the civil war.

Angola's central region, where the UNITA guerrillas operate, is the country's breadbasket. Before the civil war, it produced wheat, corn, rice and beans for the entire country. The guerrillas' ambushes and the destruction of the Benguela railroad have effectively cut the transportation of grain. There are food shortages throughout Angola, including Luanda, the capital.

Hindered in its efforts to unify this divided country by the activities of the UNITA forces, the Popular

Movement government carried out a massive seven-month offensive against them from May to November last year. I was there during part of the offensive, which had little apparent effect.

"They bombed and strafed us with their Russian bombers and jet Migs," said UNITA's guerrilla leader, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, "but we just dispersed or moved our bases to another area of the forest. I love this forest. Without it, things would be very difficult for us.

"The Cubans and Russians don't know how to fight an anti-guerrilla war," Savimbi chuckled. "The bigger the [military] machine, the easier it is to escape. They should use smaller groups, but they don't have the morale. The Cubans will not accept 20 of their men to be dropped here in the bush [on a search and destroy mission]. The [Popular Movement] soldiers are too poorly trained to do it.

"When they come with [Soviet T-34 and T-54] tanks, it is true, we will run away," Savimbi continued. "But we will return when they have passed. They've just wasted petrol."

The offensive, according to Savimbi, was conducted in four stages beginning with Operation Tigre in eastern Angola, followed by Operation Cacuenha in the south and ending simultaneously with Operation Huambo in the center and Operation Vakulakuta in Angola's border area with Namibia.

The highest number of casualties, the guerrillas said, were suffered by unarmed civilians, who, if even suspected of aiding the guerrillas with food or information about troop movements, were slaughtered when their villages were attacked.

The guerrillas admit killing unarmed civilians, too, often reluctantly, but sometimes callously.

Lt. Col. Marlo Chilulu Cheya is a guerrilla officer whose base was built a year ago close to the government-occupied town of Chitembo, in Bie Provience.

"I had to attack Chitembo several times before the

UNITA guerrillas on the march in Angola's bush country: "The Cubans and Russians don't know how to fight an anti-guerrilla war. . . ."

peasants would leave [the town] and live with us in the bush," he said when interviewed in early December. "But then some of them went back to the town."

When the peasants would leave Chitembo to cultivate their corn fields "we would attack them and kill some of them," said Cheya. The purpose of the attacks was to keep the peasants who supported the government from taking food to the soldiers in Chitembo.

Finally, after the government offensive in this area last October, Cheya said he massed a large number of guerrillas from several bases and attacked Chitembo for the seventh time, killing everyone caught in the line of fire, civilians and soldiers alike. "The people then left Chitembo because they no longer felt safe. They have now moved into the bush with us," he added casually.

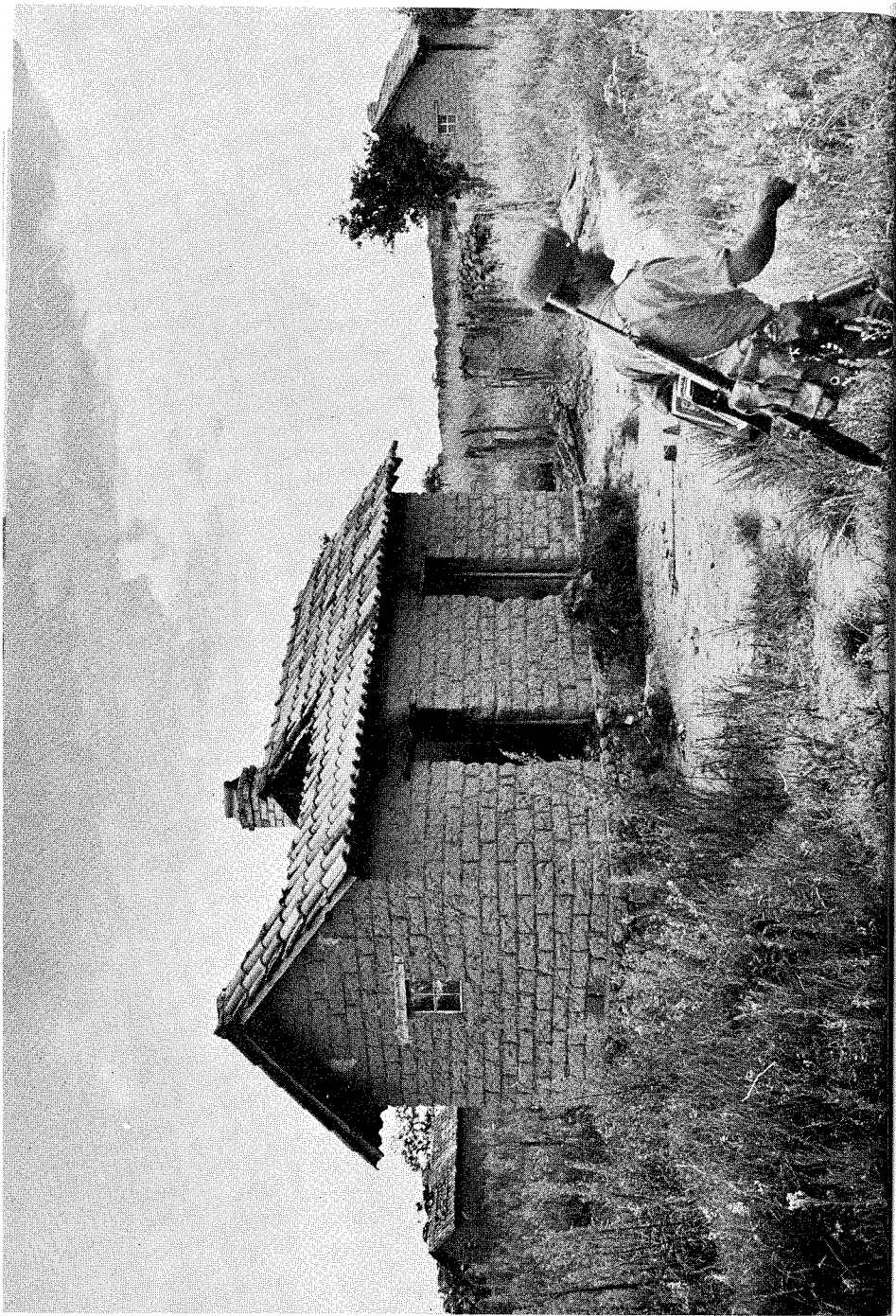
There are no frontiers or battle lines in this war. The guerrillas attack wherever government troops are concentrated. When the guerrillas are attacked in their forest bases they quickly run into the bush and regroup later to build another base in a new location.

Since the governments's offensive last fall, the Cubans have retired from the towns of the southern Angolan countryside to the region's majro cities -- Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa), Bie (formerly Silva Porto), Luso, Serpa Pinto and Sa da Bandeira.

"We have killed a thousand Cubans since February '76," said UNITA commander general Chiwale. "That is why they don't leave the cities. Too many of them are dying."

The withdrawal of the Cuban soldiers, however, has led to harsher retaliatory measures against UNITA's civilian supporters from Popular Movement troops and their allies, SWAPO, according to guerrilla leader Savimbi.

"There is a difference between the Cubans, government soldiers and the SWAPO," continued Savimbi. "The Cubans are not so savage and will usually not kill our supporters. The government soldiers are more savage and the



A guerrilla walks by a house in Kavango where a leper was burned alive by government troops in the civil war in independent Angola.

SWAPOs are the most savage," he said.

SWAPO, which allied itself with the Popular Movement government last year after UNITA collaborated with the South Africans, "would have been wiser if they did not attack us and just had a political alliance with the government. We would not have bothered them."

"Now, we will never let them operate against the South Africans in Namibia again," said UNITA's Savimba heatedly in a rare display of anger. "Never! Not unless we are defeated." SWAPO guerrillas, who formerly had good relations with the UNITA guerrillas, use southern Angola as a refuge in between attacks on South Africa forces in neighboring Namibia.

The remnants of Kavango village, with its small leper colony, is one example of many of the rising enmity on all sides of Angola's civil war. I reached Kavango, in the northeastern corner of Huila Province a short distance east of the Cubango River, last December 14.

In 1950, American Baptist missionaries came to Kavango and founded a small leper colony, built a hospital, a church and an elementary school.

A wide dirt road separates the leper colony from the main village and mission station. The small, red brick houses of the lepers were all gutted by fire. At the main village, the thatch-roofed mud huts of the peasants were also burned.

The research and treatment wing of the white-walled hospital was smoke-blackened and littered with the charred remains of medical texts on the treatment of leprosy and other debilitating tropical diseases. The homes of the one missionary and one doctor had been ransacked. Even the stuffing of their couches and beds was ripped out and strewn about the rooms.

The minister, the Rev. Darrel Hockersmith, and the physician, Dr. Robert L. Foster, "left the day after they heard the Cubans had taken Huambo on February 8th last year," said Elibeu Herculano, a male nurse who had worked at the hospital.

Huambo, Angola's second-largest city, is about 130 miles northwest of Kavango. "The Cubans arrived here first on March 2," added Chief Seven. "At first there was no trouble. They only killed one Portuguese man who was here because they said he was a UNITA supporter."

A month later Popular Movement soldiers came to Kavango for the first time and "there was no trouble," said Seven. Then in May of last year Cuban and Popular Movement troops returned together and called all the villagers to a meeting in front of the hospital.

Chief Seven dated the beginning in the deterioration of his villagers' relationship with the Popular Movement government from that May meeting.

"They told us UNITA was finished and Savimbi was dead with his legs cut off," Seven remembered. "No, we didn't believe them because there were UNITA guerrillas there in the crowd listening to them."

While they were listening to the speeches, Seven said, Popular Movement soldiers were going through their houses taking blankets, radios, salt and money. "They said theirs was the only real liberation movement, but they were thieves."

In June, the soldiers returned again and burned a UNITA car that had run out of gasoline and took all the clothes and blankets from the hospital, Seven said. Soon afterward, most of the people in the village moved into the forest "because we heard that some people in another village were shot and we thought they would return and shoot us," Seven said.

On October 22, during the government's offensive, the Popular Movement soldiers returned to Kavango without the Cubans. "I had returned to the village to weed my corn," said Seven. "It was about noon and I heard the shooting begin around the hospital. I ran away back to the forest immediately."

There were eight wounded guerrillas recuperating at the hospital when the Popular Movement soldiers attacked, said nurse Herculano. "All of them managed to escape because the troops began firing and making a lot of noise before they reached the hospital. Only the lepers were caught. They were too weak to run."

The Popular Movement soldiers "were very angry," said Seven. "They knew the UNITA guerrillas had been using the hospital. That's why they killed the lepers."

Running away into the thousands of miles of forest and thick bush of southern Angola is the standard defense of both guerrillas and their peasant supporters when attacked. But the endless woodlands also afford a useful cover for government soldiers seeking guerrilla bases.

Three weeks earlier, during the march to Kavango, I was awakened at 4:30 a.m. on November 27 by the sounds of explosions and small arms fire. I had spent the night in a small guerrilla base, what the UNITA insurgents call a "control base" to intercept government troop movements, in southern Bie Province.

My escort of 100-odd guerrillas and their officer, Maj. Mateus Katalayo, were also awakened by the sounds of fighting. "I don't know who is attacking who," said Katalayo.

Four hours later, while tramping through a wide stretch of marshland, we met a UNITA guerrilla heading south. He told us that Popular Movement soldiers had attacked a UNITA base six miles west of us earlier that morning. The soldiers surrounded the base on three sides and opened the attack with shoulder-fired Soviet rockets.

The guerrillas' sentries did not hear the soldiers because they had slipped up to the edge of the camp the night before during a violent rainstorm. "They must have had a peasant supporter of theirs guide them to the base," speculated Katalayo after talking to the guerrilla.

"This war is more complicated than the war against

the Portuguese. The Portuguese didn't know the bush and the Cubans don't know the bush," he continued, "but in the villages you have both UNITA and government supporters."

The government's peasant supporters, Katalayo said, can lead government troops right up to UNITA's bases. "The peasants know the bush as well as we do."

The fighting sometimes takes on a tit-for-tat quality. Maj. Jose Kanjundo said he ambushed a column of soldiers moving south in trucks from the Benguela railroad town of General Machado to the town of Ringoma on November 22.

"There were five trucks in the column and we killed 30 men," said Kanjundo, pointing out that his guerrillas bivouac 12 men per vehicle when conducting a road ambush.

"In retaliation," he said, "the government soldiers attacked one of our villages and killed 40 peasants the next day."

Both to avenge the slaying of the villagers and to rid his area of the government soldiers, Maj. Kanjundo attacked the town of Ringoma on the morning of December 13. "I also wanted to teach the soba [chief] at Ringoma a lesson," Kanjundo added.

"The soba had been a UNITA supporter but changed sides when the government troops came to Ringoma in October during the offensive," Kanjundo said.

With 300 guerrillas against 90 Popular Movement soldiers who were training 120 cadets, Kanjundo said they attacked Ringoma from its eastern and southern edges. "Our guerrillas on the south side opened fire first, but after two hours began to run out of ammunition. When the government troops began to advance on them, our eastern side opened up and we were able to overrun the town," he said.

Kanjundo was wounded in the left leg during the attack and was still recuperating at a forest base when I interviewed him in early January. He said his men killed 30 civilians and 51 Popular Movement soldiers in that attack. "We suffered one dead and two wounded and took 26 civilians prisoner, he said.

George Chikoti, an enthusiastic guerrilla private, said the 5 a.m. attack on Ringoma had its funny moments. "There was a Popular Movement officer who thought we were not serious. He came to his front door in his pajamas at the beginning of the attack, fired a few shots in the air, yawned and then went back into his house."

When the officer "realized we were moving into the town," Chikoti said, "he tried to run away and we shot him down. We later found sausage and eggs still cooking on his stove. We ate them."

Chikoti said the majority of the Popular Movement soldiers ran out of the town, "but we caught 12 of them, put them into a room and fired a rocket into it to kill them. It saves ammunition," he said.

I passed through Ringoma on January 13, a month after the attack, on my way north. The red clay-tile roofs of all the cement houses, the church and shops of the town had been smashed by the guerrillas with rifle butts.

"We destroy the roofs so the soldiers won't return," said Cap. N'Dala Domingos Tchniang. "It's the rainy season now and they don't like to sleep in houses without roofs."

The town was surrounded by fields of eight-foot-high corn and leafy mango trees. Scattered among the corn and trees were the rectangular mud-and-thatch houses of the peasants who still occupied them.

"The people are now angry with their soba," said Maj. Kanjundo. "Before the attack we told them it would be dangerous to stay here with the soldiers. Now they believe us.

"The soba ran away to General Machado," interjected Tchiang, "and asked the government officials to send more soldiers, but they have refused. They told him Ringoma was too far away and they would be cut off during an attack. He better not return here either. I will beat him."

The grass at the center of the town was covered with hundreds of spent cartridges, their brass coloring already turning gray. In front of a pockmarked, roofless building lay four empty green wooden boxes with Russian lettering.

"They hold Soviet 82-mm. mortars," explained Capt. Tchiang. "We captured the mortars, some rifle ammunition and these," said Tchiang as he pointed down to the brand-new brown Soviet combat boots he was wearing. He said he took them from the body of a dead Popular Movement soldier.

"We take anything we can use," said Tchiang with a nonchalant shrug. "We are guerrilleros."

GUERRILLA BASE NEAR UMPULO, Angola -- "The first government offensive came in the first days of June [1976]. They came on foot and with armored cars with heavy mortar attacks. They bombed, burned and blew up everything, but they missed us that time. They went right past us."

Guerrilla Maj. Eugenio Ngolo was talking about the first offensive of combined Cuban and Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola forces against the UNITA insurgents.

Ngolo said he had arrived at this base in central Angola a month before the offensive, after the UNITA guerrillas retreated from their last urban stronghold, Cago Coutinho, in eastern Angola, March 13.

"When we arrived here," Ngolo continued, "we immediately began to make attacks on the Benguela railroad," two days' march north from his guerrilla forest base.

"They were surprised," Ngolo said. "They didn't know that we were here. They thought we had been defeated."

But in October, the Cuban and Popular Movement forces came after the guerrillas again.

"They had many more soldiers, armored cars and trucks that time. And they came in helicopters. We weren't expecting that. One morning they just dropped from the sky right next to the base."

There was nothing for his 200 guerrillas to do but run, Ngolo said. "We scattered in all directions and ran and ran and ran," he remembered. "We stayed in the thick bush, but they even came after us at night. They dropped flares with parachutes and tried to push us into ambushes they had set up in front of us. It was a nightmare."

For a week, he said, he and the other 20 guerrillas he was running with could not stop for food -- just for a short rest or quick nap. "Half of us would sleep and the others would keep watch," he said. "We'd jump up and move away as quietly as possible when we heard them searching in the bushes for us."

Close to starvation and weak from a lack of food after 10 days, they grew careless. They walked into a trap.

"We went into this village to get some food, but we didn't know they had encircled three sides of the village during the night. They knew we were hungry and had been waiting for us." Ngolo said.

The Cuban and government troops began closing the eastern loop of the trap, Ngolo said, and mistaking each other for guerrillas, began to fire at one another. "It was the first time we knew they were there," Ngolo said. "Soldiers were coming into the village from all directions and there was only a small gap on the eastern side. I ran for it."

Ngolo and six other guerrillas, firing as they ran, made it through the gap, he said. The other 14 guerrillas were caught and killed. The survivors ran south into the bush.

Shortly afterward, helicopters flew over their heads and descended into the village. "They killed all the peasants in the village for being willing to feed us and then burned it."

On the night of February 13, the UNITA guerrillas shattered the usual quiet of Huambo, Angola's second-largest city, with satchels of hand grenades thrown into the lobby of a hotel, the city's railroad station and military police compound as part of their psychological warfare against the Marxist government.

The terrorist acts, besides having the stated purpose of upsetting the city's population, were also intended to frighten the visiting Zambian soccer team. The soccer team was drinking in the bar of the Almirante Hotel and ran from the Hotel into Huambo's shantytown slum area, where they hid until daylight, according to Maj. Mateus Katalayo, a UNITA guerrilla.

The attack on the soccer team was also a retaliation for the expulsion of UNITA officials from that country by Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda last December, Katalayo said. Kaunda had recognized the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola's government of Angola.

Several days after the attack, one of UNITA's underground workers smuggled copies of the government's newspaper, Jornal de Angola, to one of the guerrillas' bases near Huambo, where I was given a copy.

Buried inside a sports story on the 11th page of the 12-page February 15th edition was a two-paragraph reference to the incident:

"While everything was well on the way to total success, the despair and cowardice of a few leftover reactionaries managed for a brief time to thrust itself on the visitors, setting off explosive devices outside the seat of the railroad and the Almirante Hotel. It is notable that the Zambians were staying at the Ruacana Hotel, a fact that shows the isolation in which this group of bandits was acting. The explosions caused no casualities, and the physical damage was little more than the cost of broken windows.

"These explosions, which took place about 10:30 p.m. are due -- as the new Provincial Commissar of Huambo,

Comrade Pedale, pointed out at the reception he offered for the Zambians at the Palace of the People -- to the despair of the lackeys of UNITA, which Zambia expelled from its territory. These remnants of the rebel group wanted to show displeasure and also make it appear that rumors circulating in the reactionary press have some basis. . ."

UMPULO, Angola -- After an hour-long wait that seemed interminable, a guerrilla appeared at the treeline on the west bank of the Cuanza River and silently waved a pink palm above his head in a long, sweeping motion signaling us that it was safe to cross over. The forest on the other side was free of ambushers.

The two Luimbi boatmen raised their eight-foot poling sticks, stood up slowly at either end of their weather-beaten canoe, a bleached-gray log, and motioned us to enter the boat three at a time.

Dark brown log pillars of a bridge blown up by the guerrillas protruded through the gray water -- jagged reminders of how vulnerable we were to a helicopter attack on the open floodplain of this ancient Angolan river valley.

I clambered into the bobbing canoe with two other guerrillas. The boatmen pushed out into the stream, carefully keeping the prow pointing into the current and poling the boat sideways to the west bank.

Almost an hour later, all 40-odd guerrillas had been ferried across the Cuanza River in threes, and we moved quickly toward the distant forest. I looked over my shoulder through the heavy rain and saw the two boatmen pole back to the east river bank, drag the heavy canoe from the water and hide it in a patch of tall grass.

"We'll have to move north for another six hours," whispered N'Dala Domingos Tchiang, a UNITA guerrila captain. "The rain is good cover, but it won't last forever. "I want to move far away from the river."

Tchiang's comments were the first words spoken in the two hours we had spent waiting and being ferried across the river, since passing throuth Umpulo, a riverside town destroyed by the guerrillas. Even the peasant boatmen had said nothing. Voices carry long distances on an open plain.

Such conditioning also helps the guerrilla accept, without the prospect of quick victory, a life filled with anxious moments of anticipating a sudden attack, traveling long distances on foot in bad weather or suffering a crippling wound with no medical aid.

What motivates men to live like this? What drives the guerrilla, and his family, to fight on with no end in sight from weakness or strength, with and without food supplies with and without ammunition.

The night before the crossing, January 11, peasant supporters of the UNITA guerrillas told Capt. Tchiang that Angolan government patrols had recently been seen on the west side of the Cuanza. We were moving through the same area.

Once we had left the vicinity of the river and were into the forest, we settled into a leisurely three-mile-an-hour gait, stopping at a "safe" village 18 miles away. To the guerrillas, a safe village is one where the soba, or chief, and his followers are strong UNITA supporters.

The villagers brought us bowls of boiled corn meal stiffened to the consistency of bread dough, and rancid, greasy, smoked hippopotamus meat. Leftovers.

Tchiang laughed when I turned up my nose at the meat. "You'll get used to it," he said. "You'll get used to a lot of things."

During the 7 1/2 months and 2,100 miles that I lived and hiked with the UNITA guerrillas I did "get used to a lot of things" -- including hippopotamus meat, which, when fresh, tastes like beef -- but I always knew my adjustment to their harsh existence was only temporary. They, however, might conceivably have to live this way for years.

A band of UNITA guerrillas crosses the Quito River in Moxico Province, Angola.

In dozens of interviews and conversations I probed to find out what sustains them in their war.

The rank-and-file UNITA guerrillas would initially respond with lengthy rhetorical anti-Communist spiels against the Marxist Popular Movement government and its Soviet advisers and Cuban troops. Very few of them, however, knew the difference between the Communism of their enemies and the socialism professed by the UNITA leadership.

Their next level of response would take on African nationalist posture against the large number of Portuguese whites and Angolan mesticos (persons of mixed African and Portuguese ancestry) running the Popular Movement Government, a situation that visably rankled some of them.

At the base of their alienation, however -- a position more readily articulated by guerrillas from the peasant class than those from the educated elite -- was an emotional attachment to kinship, tribe, and the Angolan south, and an almost mystical allegiance to UNITA's charismatic guerrilla leader, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi.

These elements have already sustained some of the present-day UNITA officers, many from the peasant class, in their fight against the Portuguese from 1966 to 1974. During that time, they had also repeatedly clashed in fratricidal fighting with the guerrillas of the Popular Movement and the National Front, each of the three groups trying to eradicate the other two.

When the Portuguese Colonial African empire began to crumble in the spring of 1974, each of the three guerrilla movements was allowed by the Portuguese to proselytize openly. Today many of the new UNITA officers are former members of elite commando units of the Portuguese Colonial Army. Half of that army -- which reached a peak strength of 69,000 men in 1974 -- were African Angolans. UNITA also recruited heavily among the youth of the urban African elite, something they had been unable to do during the war against the Portuguese.

Most of the former members of the Portuguese armed forces now in UNITA said they joined voluntarily because it was the movement based in the south and was their political preference. Some of the urban youths said they were either tricked into becoming UNITA guerrillas or literally kidnapped.

Still other youths said they had grown up as refugees in neighboring Zambia and Zaire, where they were drawn into clandestine activities for UNITA by their parents. They returned to Angola after 1974 as UNITA supporters.

Drawing from these sources and a large reservoir of peasant supporters, the UNITA guerrillas claim they have grown from 3,00 in 1973 to 23,000 today, but not without problems.

I spent 10 weeks with the UNITA guerrillas in 1973 when they were fighting the Portuguese. The rigid discipline evident everywhere then has deteriorated today.

Overall their moral is high, but they are plagued with desertions, disobedience, alcoholism, stealing and, at times the abuse of unmarried women living in their military camps.

"It was like that when we began in 1966 also," reported Maj. Mateus Katalayo, a guerrilla officer who had been with UNITA since then. "What you saw in 1973 was an army that had been through seven years of training. The small number of experienced [guerrillas] were swallowed by the large number of recruits."

Since the beginning of this year there has been a heavy emphasis on discipline, with punishments ranging from imprisonment in crude log prisons to severe beatings with sticks.

"We've also started to improve our political education," said Lt. Col. Charles Kandanda. "Explaining the reasons we're fighting against the Popular Movement forces, that the Cubans and Russians are 'socialist imperialists.'"

"Many of our [new] guerrillas don't have any political awareness and some are not interested in politics," said Kandanda, "but we want to build a political army. They won't fight well unless they understand why they are fighting."

Guerrilla Tchiang, a stern disciplinarian who struts in his tapered, tan cast-off military uniform when addressing his soldiers, is one UNITA soldier who professes disdain for politics. A lean and muscular 21-year-old high school graduate in a country where less than 10 percent of the population is literate, Tchiang was a member of the urban elite. He said he was kidnaped into UNITA's army.

One night while warming ourselves around a village cooking fire, Tchiang pointed across the dancing flames to one of the subordinate officers in his company, 2d Lt. Junior Costa.

"My friend over there arranged to have me kidnaped," he said in Swahili with a mock show of malice.

"What now?" asked the perplexed Costa, who does not understand Swahili, in Portuguese. Tchiang learned Swahili two years ago while undergoing 10 months of military training with 14 other UNITA guerrillas in Tanzania.

Tchiang continued to tell me his tale in Swahili, and, at appropriate moments, I would look over at Costa in feigned dismay. Costa showed increasing anxiety with each glance.

"I had a car," continued Tchiang, "lots of girl-friends and wasn't interested in politics. It was around the spring of 1975 and the movements were all holding rallies and recruiting soldiers. I never listened to the speakers. I went to the rallies to see the girls."

Costa had already joined the UNITA guerrillas, Tchiang said, and was continually after him to join also. "I kept telling him I wasn't interested," Tchiang said.

One afternoon in April, Costa invited him to a party in Bie city (formerly Silva Porto). "He said there would be lots of girls," Tchiang added.

When he arrived at the "party" that night and parked his car, a group of armed UNITA guerrillas stepped out of a clump of bushes and ordered him to stand in front of the house with a group of nattily dressed men. "They had been invited to the party also," he said.

His friend Costa came over and laughed at him, Tchiang said. "He told me it was going to be a long, long party," he recalled. After waiting several hours, the group of "partygoers" were piled into a truck and driven east to Luso.

"At the airport [UNITA leader] Savimbi spoke to us about how we must learn all we could while training in Tanzania," Tchiang said. "No, I don't think he knew some of us had been kidnaped. After he finished speaking we boarded a plane and flew to Dar es Salaam [Tanzania's capital]."

While Tchiang was training in Tanzania that summer, fighting broke out in Angola between UNITA and the Popular Movement.

"Our (Tanzanian) officers told us that if UNITA won we could go back, but if they lost we would be put in detention camps." At that point, Tchiang said he became an earnest UNITA supporter. "I was angry."

The training continued, however, and Tchiang said they worked harder at learning everything that was taught. "We were frightened," Tchiang said about himself and the other UNITA trainees. "We didn't know what was happening at home. We read about the Cubans coming to help the Popular Movement."

By October "it was clear that Tanzania was going to support the Popular Movement," said Kawendima Chipipa, UNITA's representative in Tanzania at the time, "so I arranged to get our men out." Chipipa is now inside Angola with the UNITA guerrillas.

"The customs people at the Dar es Salaam airport asked us who we were" when they were preparing to board a flight out of Tanzania, said Tchiang. "I told them we were visiting college students and they asked if we had had a good time and come back again. Then we left."

Back in Angola in early November, "we were put right into battle and fought until we retreated from Qago Countinho March 13, 1976," he said. "I never want to fight like that again. Day and night for hours until the muzzle on my [Soviet-made AK-47 assault] rifle began to melt. The rifle? I captured it from a Cuban I killed.

"I prefer the guerrilla fighting we're doing now," he continued. "Our attacks don't last longer than two hours and always by surprise. Politics?" he said, wrinkling his nose. "Sitaki" [Swahili for "I don't want it"].

"WHAT?" 2nd Lt. Costa asked again when he saw that Capt. Tchiang's story was finished. "You just go and get some more firewood," Tchiang told him abruptly in Portuguese. As Costa moved away, Tchiang switched back to Swahili.

"You should have seen his face when I came back a captain," Tchiang laughed. "We met up in Gago Coutinho just before the retreat. I had him transferred to my company. No, I'm not angry with him now. I just make him work harder than the others."

George Pinto Chikoti, a 22-year-old private in UNITA's guerrilla army, came back to Angola to spend his "school holidays" after 14 years as a political refugee in neighboring Zambia. Chikoti flew into Huambo in December 1975, when the civil war was at its hottest.

"I was supposed to start medical school on a full scholarship at the University of Zambia the next March," Chikoti said, "but I was really anxious to find out what was happening in Angola" after the end of Portuguese rule. Angola had achieved independence the previous month.

Chikoti, his father, mother, two brothers and sister fled Angola in 1961 after an African neighbor of theirs in Huambo informed the Portuguese colonial secret police that the father had "political books" in their home.

As he grew up in Zambia, Chikoti said he was drawn into the clandestine activities of UNITA because his father was a member. "I picked up English quickly" in the former British colony, Chikoti said, "and was kept busy translating documents and propaganda."

When he returned to Angola, he was drafted to teach English at Huambo's industrial high school to UNITA members and then fled into the forest with the guerrillas when they retreated from Huambo on February 7, 1976.

"I was still planning to go back to Zambia to begin school in March," Chikoti said. His older brother, who had reentered Angola several months ahead of him, "told me I was obligated to stay and fight. Thereafter I took military training. It took me some time to get adjusted."

Chikoti said his first fight took place last September 9, when the UNITA guerrillas attacked a train on Angola's Benguela railroad between the towns of Nova Sintra and Kamacupa. "Everything was quite strange," he recalled. "So much fire and explosions. But when I began to fire and people started jumping out of the train, I felt good. Before, I felt afraid."

Catamba Didaldo is a cherub-faced Cuanhama peasant youth and UNITA guerrilla who guesses his age to be "about 18." Didaldo said he was born in Chiedi, a southern Angolan town close to the border of South African-ruled Namibia, an area where fierce fighting took place last fall between UNITA and the combined Cuban, Popular Movement and SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organization) forces.

The South Africans reported that some 3,000 refugees, mainly Cuanhama, fled across the border into northern Namibia during the height of the fighting.

I met Didaldo after he had hiked four weeks from the southern border area up into central Angola's Huambo Province to attend UNITA's congress at the end of March. He said he had just escaped from prison.

"I joined UNITA in 1974, before the [civil] war began," he said. "I was attracted by the guns and military uniforms they had. The National Front and the Popular Movement were recruiting in my area, too, but they only passed through giving out money and salt. I joined UNITA because they stayed and held meetings with us continuously."

Last fall there was fighting "all around my home, but I only fought in one battle. It was my first battle," Didaldo said.

Didaldo said he had gone with a band of UNITA guerrillas to attack a Popular Movement base when he and his group were caught in an ambush.

"I ran and took cover behind a tree and pointed my gun in their direction, but I did not fire. The commander passed and said if I didn't fire he would take my ammunition and give it to another guerrilla," he said.

"I was afraid of the mortars. I had never heard them before, but I began to fire and they finally ran away," Didaldo said. "After the fight, I never felt fear again."

Soon afterward, Didaldo said, he was arrested by Popular Movement soldiers "when I went into Chiedi to attend my father's funeral." He said he had hidden his weapons, a Portuguese G-3 automatic rifle, a pistol and grenade, at his parents' cattle ranch a mile outside the town.

"The people [at the funeral] told the soldiers that I was a UNITA guerrilla," and he was put into the town's jail with other suspected guerrillas, he said.

"I was slapped around many times, but never beaten badly," Didaldo said. "The Cubans would come and say, 'UNITA must be eliminated from here. We don't want UNITA

here.' The Cubans did not slap us much, but the Popular Movement soldiers would beat us for a long time.

"Every Saturday they would hold a rally in Chiedi and they used to show me at the rallies and call me retarded," Didaldo continued. "They told the people that [guerrilla leader] Savimbi was in jail. They would point to me and tell the people, 'These are the bandits who are stopping the development of Angola.'"

After one Saturday rally, at 4 a.m. Sunday last February 20, Didaldo said, the UNITA guerrillas attacked Chiedi and the prison guards ran away. "I stuck my head out of the door and the guerrillas thought I was a Cuban and shot at me," he said.

"Then they recognized me and all the prisoners were released and all the civilians were told to leave the town for the countryside," Didaldo said. "I wasn't too angry about the beatings they gave me," Didaldo added, "but they shouldn't have called me retarded in front of my [Cuanhama] people. I will make them pay for that."

The type of bitter resolve young Didaldo expressed is also evident in the lenthy, unyielding commitment the older UNITA guerrillas have made, such as Lt. Col. Jeremias Kussia, 43.

Kussia was trained in China in 1965, captured by Portuguese soldiers in eastern Angola in 1966, beaten until he lost the sight of his left eye, spent almost eight years working in the Sao Nicolau salt mines while in prison, and said he is a great-grandson of the Ovimbundu chief Ekuikui, leader of a bloody but unsuccessful rebellion against the Portuguese in 1880.

"As I fought against Portuguese colonialism and culture, so will I fight against the Popular Movement and European communism," said the usually jovial Kussia in a harsh voice.

A peasant leader greets UNITA
officer Jeremias Kussia.

"I am not against sharing independence with the Popular Movement government, but I am against their importing Cubans, Russians and Communist ideology here," he continued.

"I prefer complete liberty without intervention of foreigners, because they want to end our way of life. We will lose our heritage."

HUAMBO PROVINCE, Angola -- Guerrilla Maj. Mateus Katalayo, 32, sat stunned in his car as the large convoy of Cubans filed past him in Soviet trucks, tanks and armored cars pulling the devastating 122 mm. "Stalin Organ" rocket launchers behind them.

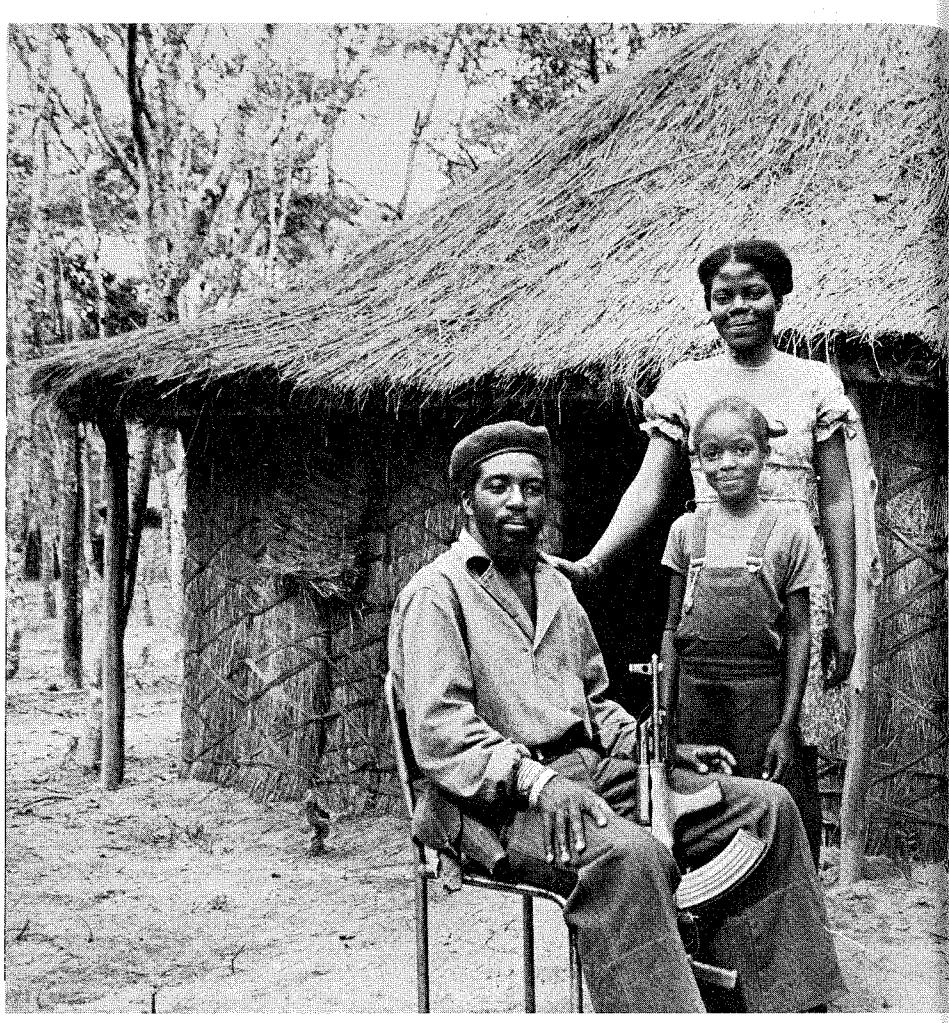
It was the morning of February 8, 1976, and the city of Huambo was being occupied by victorious Cuban troops. Katalayo's fellow UNITA guerrillas had evacuated the city the night before with his wife and daughter.

"I had just driven into Huambo from the coastal city Benguela when I heard trucks coming from the right as I approached an intersection," Katalayo recalled. "I thought it was the South Africans returning to help us, so I stopped."

As the Cuban convoy rumbled past, Katalayo said he realized his hometown had fallen to Angola's government forces and he wondered what had happened to his family. "No, I wasn't nervous," he said, "I just sat there in my car and they didn't bother me, even though I was in uniform. I drove to my house, but it was empty."

Katalayo fled into the bush in the wake of the retreating UNITA guerrillas, but did not catch up to his wife and daughter until November, ten months later.

"Until I met up with them," he said, "I worried about my daughter Mbimbi the most. She grew up in Switzerland in a very middle-class life while I was studying there. I didn't know if she could adjust to the guerrillas' life."



The Katalayos, who left study in Switzerland for the guerrilla's life in the bush.

The Katalayos are just one of hundreds of families suddenly separated by Angola's civil war and, much later, reunited in the forest camps of the UNITA rebels. The husbands and fathers are UNITA guerrillas and their wives either have become guerrillas as well or limit themselves to looking after the family's needs.

The children, from infants born in the bush during the retreat to adolescents, grow up on a diet of war and hardship. Most of the thousands of children I met seemed to have adjusted to the guerrillas' life more rapidly than the adults.

Katalayo's nine-year-old daughter, Mbimbi, broke out into a toothy shy grin when I asked her how she felt about living in the forest, but she would not answer the question. Her mother, Anabela, 27, answered for her.

"When we first retreated into the bush, she would complain about sleeping in the rain, not enough food to eat and the walking we had to do when the Cubans were chasing us," Anabela Katalayo said. "We had to walk for hours and hours. She was always asking me, 'Where is Daddy?'"

"I didn't know what to tell her," Anabela continued. "I didn't know myself."

I traveled with the Katalayos for two weeks through Angola's Bie Province shortly after they were reunited at a UNITA guerrilla base in Cuando Cubango Province. Maj. Katalayo was heading for his new base outside his home-town, Huambo.

One day in mid-November, we hiked through the forest, across three swamps and up, over and down steep hills for eight hours without stopping. I wanted to stop and rest, but I refused to say so and counted on Mbimbi, then 8, to ask for a rest stop. She never said anything and kept up with the brisk pace her father set. It was the first day that I walked for eight hours without stopping.

Even the guerrillas, who had been carrying large plastic bags of plastic explosives, wearily dropped their

loads when we finally stopped.

"What's the matter," Katalayo asked them. "Haven't you been circumcised?" a sarcastic questioning of whether they had yet become men.

Anabela and Mbimbi laughed hard.

"She still misses her schoolfriends in Switzerland," her mother explained, "and wants to know when she can go back to school. But she is beginning to understand what the war is all about. She was very confused about it all when we first came back in April 1975.

"I don't want to be one of the female guerrillas," Anabela Katalayo said. "I think I'd rather teach when we set up our bush schools. The life is hard, but I have become accustomed to it, too. We are both going to stay with my husband, Mateus."

In the first week of March this year, Mateus Katalayo's base 18 miles south of Huambo was attacked at dawn by government forces.

"We barely had time to get out of the base," said Katalayo. "I grabbed my gun, Anabela grabbed a few clothes and Mbimbi asked what was happening. I told her we were being attacked and she said, 'Oh, let's go!'"

GUERRILLA BASE NEAR ANDULO, Angola -- Celeste Cango Autunes was the first prisoner led into the camp. She was blindfolded and seemingly composed, the only sign of her recent ordeal the drops of dried blood on the front of her green-striped yellow pullover.

A young boy whipped off the towel wrapped around her eyes, she blinked and looked slowly around at the jeering, bearded faces of the guerrillas. Fear gradually replaced her bewildered look, her legs began to quiver, and urine trickled down to her ankles and into her dirty white sneakers. The guerrillas laughed harder.

"Viva, UNITA," she said weakly, raising the partly clenched fist of her left hand.

"THE RIGHT ARM, THE RIGHT ARM!" the guerrillas howled.

She quickly raised her right arm, dropped her left, and made another whispered effort at the guerrillas' chant.

"No, very bad!" the guerrillas shouted. "Very weak!"

Celeste Autunes, 19, stopped her feeble effort at appeasing her captors and began to stroke the scab on her swollen left cheek where a guerrilla's rifle butt struck her the morning before, knocking her to the ground.

Celeste Autunes and two government soldiers had been captured January 27, when the UNITA forces attacked the Angolan government's garrison at Andulo, a day's march west of one of their forest bases.

I interviewed ten UNITA prisoners at different times from December to March and at different locations during a 2,100-mile hike I made with the guerrillas through their forest strongholds in five Angolan provinces. The entire trip lasted from October 4, 1976, to May 22, 1977.

All of the prisoners were interviewed through

UNITA interpreters in Portuguese. I was able to follow the drift through my rudimentary understanding of the language. Their words were then translated into English for me.

Five of the prisoners were Popular Movement soldiers, one was a government militiaman, one was a former UNITA guerrilla and admitted informer for the government's secret police, and the remaining three were civilians.

I chose at random all of the prisoners to interview from groups ranging from two to 37. I interviewed three of the prisoners, Celeste Antunes and two soldiers, immediately after their capture.

All ten prisoners obviously wanted to ingratiate themselves with the UNITA guerrillas, and most were intimidated. All were hesitant when asked particular details of life under the Popular Movement government, and only one admitted that she had actively supported the government.

But from hours-long interviews with each, at different times and at places separated by hundreds of miles, a picture emerged of a newly independent government caught in the chaos of a debilitating civil war.

Officially called the People's Republic of Angola, the Communist government, headquartered in Luanda, enjoys the support of a majority of the nation's urban intellectuals--middle-class Angolan blacks and mesticos (mulattoes) as well as of the few educated Portuguese who remained after most of the half-million colonial settlers left.

The prisoners said the Popular Movement government is aggressively seeking the support of all Angolans and has a strong following among the Kimbundu people, who make up 25 percent of the country's population of more than 5 million.

The UNITA guerrillas, the prisoners said, have effectively impaired road and rail transportation; since their bases are in central Angola's grain-growing region, this is causing desperate food shortages in all towns and

cities, including Luanda.

Almost daily last fall I would listen to the government's call over Luanda radio for "voluntarios" to work without pay in harvesting the country's coffee crop, 20 percent of which was finally exported, according to Western sources.

The government has formed a secret police, recruiting many of the African informers who work for the Portuguese secret police network during Angola's colonial era.

A large number of Popular Movement soldiers have been impressed into military service, are ill-trained and undisciplined; this has resulted in their abusing urban civilians, the prisoners claimed. Periodically over Luanda radio the government would announce the imprisonment and execution of small numbers of soldiers and policemen for stealing, rape or murder.

At the end of May, an African nationalist faction within the Popular Movement government tried to overthrow Angola's president, Agostinho Neto, and were put down, reportedly with the aid of Cuban forces. The bases of the coup attempt were openly expressed anti-Portuguese and anti-mestico sentiments, directed at the large role these two minority groups play in running the Angolan government, and desires for a closer alignment with the Soviet Union.

"It is good to have this type of confusion," said UNITA leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi. "The more confusion, the better is is for us. I like confusion. Lots of it."

In the early stages of the civil war, in 1975, the UNITA guerrillas captured 12 Cuban soldiers and army officers and an uncounted number of Popular Movement troops and commanders. All of them were executed last year during a massive seven-month offensive against the guerrillas by the combined Cuban and Popular Movement forces.

"All of the prisoners were shot by the time the

second bomb fell," said Lt. Col. Waldemar Pires Chindondo, UNITA's chief of staff. "When our bases are attacked, we move. We don't take prisoners with us."

While I was there the UNITA guerrillas captured more Popular Movement soldiers and officers, but executed all of the officers.

The Cuban soldiers quit their rural garrisons at the end of the offensive in November, and were not engaged in battles with the guerrillas.

"From now on," said Savimbi in March, "all Cubans, all Popular Movement commanders and all Portuguese fighting with the government will be executed. We will take only Popular Movement soldiers as prisoners.

"We keep some of the soldiers for 'reeducation,'" explained Capt. Jaka Jamba. "They have not been indoctrinated into the Marxist line of the government. The commanders are hardline Marxists. There is nothing else to do but to kill them."

Civilians who survive a successful UNITA attack on one of the rural towns of southern Angola are also taken as prisoners. "The peasants who support the government are not Marxists, not socialists, not anything political," said Lt. Col. Sabino Sandele, who commands the UNITA region near Andulo.

"They have been bought by the government with blankets and salt," Sandele claimed, "or forced into the army." It was Sandele's guerrillas who attacked Andulo at the end of January and captured Celeste Antunes and two government soldiers.

The day the guerrillas left Sandele's base for the attack, I was bedridden with a high fever and could not go. At 5:10 a.m. on January 27, however, I was startled awake by the noise of explosions and small-arms fire. I was also drenched in perspiration. The fever had broken.

"It only took them 20 minutes to overrun the town,"

Sandele said later after messengers arrived back at the base that night. He gleefully continued to count off the grim statistics the messengers gave him.

"We counted 97 dead" soldiers and civilians. "Three hundred civilians ran away from the town. We killed a Cuban journalist when he was running to his car. He was the only Cuban in the town."

Sandele claimed there was a battalion -- about 500 men -- of Popular Movement soldiers at Andulo, but he refused to say how many guerrillas he sent on the attack. I counted 1,110 guerrillas who returned to the base in small groups the following day. The guerrillas said two of their men were killed and buried outside of the town. Three wounded guerrillas were carried back to the base in blanket litters.

Of three prisoners the guerrillas said they captured, only two, civilian Celeste Antunes and a soldier, Fernando Stavao, were brought back to the base. "The other soldier tried to escape on the march back here," said Sandele, "was recaptured and executed."

Celeste Antunes said she was born, grew up, finished the third grade of elementary school and was married to her childhood sweetheart in Mussende, a town northeast of Andulo. She and her husband were married last December, she said.

Popular Movement soldiers "came to our town in January and took us and three of my brothers to Andulo," she said. "They were forced to join the army. They were given training, but no weapons."

She, her husband and a girl were put in a small house near the town's church, she said. "There was no food," Antunes continued. "We used to eat badly prepared rice, a small plate for each of us, twice a day. Nothing else."

"They used to tell us that 'those people fighting in the bush are your relatives and we can't die here alone,'" said Antunes, an Ovimbundu -- the same tribe as UNITA's leader, Savimbi.

On the day of the attack, she said, she and her husband had been in Andulo for two weeks. "When the attack began my husband ran away and left me. I ran out of the house toward the UNITA men and shouted, 'Brothers, don't shoot me' with my hands up," she said. One of the guerrillas ran at her and knocked her down with his rifle butt.

Fernando Stavao, 28, was brought blindfolded into Sandele's camp in his tattered Popular Movement uniform a few minutes behind Antunes. Government soldiers came to his village, Chivavulu, in the beginning of January, Stavao said, and ordered all of its approximately 75 inhabitants to go with them to a meeting in Andulo.

"At the meeting they told the [village] elders, 'We want your children in the army because we are dying too much,'" Stavao said. "They said, 'The number of our troops is going down.'"

Stavao and two other men from his village were selected from the crowd by the government soldiers and the rest of the villagers, including his wife and two sons, were sent home.

"We were put in prison for two weeks," he said. "They were always telling us, 'Why didn't you come before? You can stay here, be in the army and fight the bandits in the bush.'"

A week before the attack, he said, he was released from prison and given an American M-1 carbine that had been captured from the UNITA guerrillas. "When the attack began, I hid in some grass and threw down my rifle," Stavao said. "Then I gave myself up while saying, 'Don't kill me! I was once a UNITA [supporter], but I was forced to be here!'"

The scarcity of food is not limited to the government-controlled towns and cities, a point that was made by a feisty 22-year-old widow whose husband was

killed by the UNITA guerrillas, Maravilha Mbaka.

When I met Mbaka, she had been a prisoner in a guerrilla camp in an isolated area of Bie Province for six months with her two young daughters, Elsa Maria, 5 1/2, and Augusta Luzia, 2 1/2, and 34 other female prisoners.

Her husband, she said, was a clerk on the Benguela railroad, and they were on a train to Chicala when they were attacked August 4.

"The train had passed through Cangombe at about 5 p.m.," she said "when we were surprised by the explosions." Her husband pushed her and their two daughters onto the floor and lay on top of them, she added.

"During the fighting, he was wounded and bleeding badly," Mbaka continued. The guerrillas "left him there when they made everyone leave the train and go into the forest. I know he died."

Mbaka said that for the first few days in the forest she was afraid, but has since adjusted and enjoys the company of the other women.

"My most important problem here is food," said Mbaka, turning to glare at the interpreter, Maj. Eugenio Ngolo.

"Every day I go to the stock and some days there is no food. That is a problem for my children."

The usually unflappable Ngolo, who was in charge of the base, swallowed hard, turned toward me and defensively answered the unasked question.

"There has been a food problem in this area since the offensive," he said. "The offensive disrupted the planting."

"And both my girls suffer from borbulhas," interrupted Mbaka as she pointed to the open sores covering their arms and legs. "I am afraid for them, but what can I do? There is no medicine. I pray every day for strength and help from God."

Abel Ngere, 23, and Luciano Sangungo, 18, were two Popular Movement soldiers who joined the army "because we had nothing else to do," Ngere, the elder said.

It was the second day of their captivity when I met the two men. Both were being kept, tied hand and foot with coarse handmade hemp ropes, in an abandoned roadside Portuguese shop. The cement-walled store was the only sturdy structure in a small village thirteen miles south of Nova Sintra, a Benguela railroad town. Their faces were swollen and bruised from beatings.

Ngere and Sangungo said they were from southern Angola and were sent to Luanda in September 1975 -- shortly after the civil war began -- for military training. "We had a difficult time there, Ngere said. "There was little food."

They were returned south to Nova Sintra in December as part of an escort guarding the new Angolan currency, called kwanzas, which were exchanged for the old Portuguese escudo bills in early January.

"At first we were happy because we thought there would be more food here, but there wasn't," Ngere added.

The two prisoners said their officers ordered them to put on civilian clothes and go with 50-odd other Popular Movement soldiers to "steal" food from the peasants outside Nova Sintra.

"We stole some cattle and were returning to the town when we were ambushed by the UNITA people," Sangungo said. "Some of the soldiers died. We left the cattle and ran into the bush and threw away our guns. Some peasants saw us and told the UNITA people and we were captured near here."

Both men had been sitting up on their knees with their hands loosened, an armed guerrilla standing directly behind them, during the two-hour interview. UNITA guerrilla Capt. Joaquim Kangaushi, who had escorted me to the makeshift jail from a nearby civilian rally, leaned forward and looked both men in the eyes.

"I will keep you to see if you can be 'reeducated,'" said Kangaushi in a low, dry voice. Then slowly, enunciating each word purposefully, he added, "If I do not think I can trust you or I feel you are too stupid to learn, then I will personally shoot each of you in the head."

Ngere and Sangungo eagerly applauded Kangaushi's words with loud claps and thanked him for the opportunity to be "reeducated." They assured him they would be eager students.

As Kangaushi and I walked the three miles back to the rally through a drizzling rain, he protested at my cynical disbelief in "reeducation," which I expressed with an appropriate Portuguese profanity.

"No, no it works," he said. "I'll let them sit in jail for a month or two. Let them think a little." Then Kangaushi said he would give them lessons in Angolan history: how, why and when the Portuguese came, and Angolan resistance to Portuguese rule. "They've never heard this before," he said. "The Portuguese never taught it."

From that point, he said, he will review with them what they saw in Luanda -- Portuguese civil administrators, Cuban soldiers and Soviet advisers, all supporting the Popular Movement government. A new imperialism.

"So what, if it is one-sided?" he continued. "I'm on one side. When I'm finished they'll have gotten information they never heard before, never thought of and I'll have two new warriors."

Jose da Silva drove his van from his town in Huambo, six miles east to the small town of Santo Amaro, on the morning of February 18, he said. It was his normal daily round-trip run to pick up charcoal and take it back to Huambo to sell.

"The first thing I saw were the people bringing the bags of charcoal to my van when I stopped" at his usual spot in the town's center, Silva said. "Then I saw

UNITA guerrilla Capt. Joaquim Kanguashi points to captured government soldiers Abdel Negere, left, and Luciano Sagungo outside their prison in a guerrilla camp.

the UNITA soldiers surrounding me and then I was arrested." Silva was a member of the government's militia forces, Organizacao de Defesa Popular.

Three days later, his wife, Victoria Nachinlunlu, left their two children at their home in the Sao Joao shantytown outskirts of Huambo, and with Silva's brother came to look for him in Santo Amaro.

"I went to the usual place, where my husband picked up charcoal, and was arrested also," said Nachinlunlu, who like most married Angolan women keeps her own surname.

Silva, his wife and brother were all reunited inside a prison at a UNITA guerrilla base 18 miles south of Huambo. From there, along with four other prisoners, they were marched about a hundred miles southeast to a jail at one of guerrilla leader Savimbi's bases, where they arrived on March 5.

During an interview March 6 with the couple, Silva said he had joined the government's militia not to protect the city against attacks by the guerrillas, but to protect himself from a Popular Movement soldier who was after his wife and had threatened to kill him.

"I was afraid," Silva said, "so they gave me a rifle, "a bolt action Mauser. All we did was patrol at night around the city, and they took the guns back during the day," Silva said. "I didn't care much for the government."

Silva's wife, Nachinlunlu, said she had actively supported the government and was a member of the Popular Movement's Organization of Angolan Women.

"I joined because they offered us education courses and instructions on how to sew," she said. "We learned to cook and sew, and I was doing the fourth class of primary school."

The couple had been captured by the UNITA guerrillas

because they were members of organizations of the Popular Movement government. They and the other prisoners taken from Huambo and Santo Amaro would be kept, the guerrillas said, until they had been "reeducated."

On March 27, Paul Antonio, 27, was relaxing in the early morning in Mbunjei, in southern Huambo Province. Half of the garrison's 140 Popular Movement soldiers were out scouring the countryside looking for the UNITA guerrillas' congress. The other half were in line for breakfast.

Suddenly, said Antonio, he heard a lot of running footsteps, but no shooting. His commanding officer ran by him shouting, "Run, Kayumbuka [the area's UNITA commander] is coming!" he said.

"Twenty-five of us were killed," Antonio said. "Three tried to give themselves up, but one was killed and the other two ran. The guerrillas shot me while I was raising my right hand with the extended forefinger in the UNITA sign to give myself up," he said.

The next morning while being interviewed, Antonio shifted his position in the chair as an indignant scowl flickered over his face. "They could have at least waited to see I wasn't trying to shoot anyone."

Antonio had been lucky. The bullet had entered his left shoulder and gone out the back without hitting a bone. "It's just sore now and still bleeds a little," Antonio said of the day-old wound.

"You know we were ready to surrender and join UNITA," Angonio continued. "No, it wasn't because we had food problems. Our food [convoy] came from Lubango [in Huila Province, west of Mbunjei] and was never ambushed by the UNITA guerrillas."

"The soldiers didn't like the commander because he was weak, and they were angry about being given new Portuguese uniforms and boots," Antonio added.

"We wanted to join UNITA in the bush, but there was no way to contact them or come over to them. All the soldiers were afraid they'd be killed."

BIE PROVINCE, Angola -- The short, stocky prison guard grunted as he dragged away the heavy logs covering the narrow hole. Then he lowered a ladder made of saplings into the hole and barked an order for one of the two prisoners to come up.

"Lioliya, get up here," the guard shouted. A few seconds later, Vasco (Lioliya) Chinguar, 29, former guerrilla captain, unsuccessful assassin, Portuguese army scout and secret-police informer, weakly climbed up out of the 15-foot-deep hole he had been imprisoned in for almost a month.

His eyes blinked several times as they adjusted to the bright light, and then he nodded at me in recognition. Chinguar extended his right hand to shake mine and the guard knocked it down with his short black rubber truncheon. "None of that," said the guard brusquely.

Vasco Chinguar is the only man I have met on all three of my trips to Angola.

I first met him as a guerrilla captain in UNITA in the summer of 1973. He was then fighting the Portuguese colonialists and I was traveling with the guerrillas at their invitation, to get their side of the story.

In the summer of 1974, I returned to Angola on the Portuguese side at the invitation of the Armed Forces Movement, which had overthrown Portugal's political dictatorship the previous April. I met Chinguar working as a scout for the Portuguese army's intelligence unit, locating UNITA guerrilla bases for them to destroy.

On this last trip, he was in one of the UNITA guerrillas' forest prisons after being captured in Huambo while working for the newly independent Angolan government's

Vasco Chinguar . . . a man for all factions.

secret police. When I interviewed him at the end of February there was a heated debate going on among the UNITA guerrillas about whether he should be executed.

There are men like Chinguar in every war. Seemingly apolitical, they can switch sides just as quickly as they perceive a change in the tide of battle. Chinguar, who has been involved in the fighting in Angola from the period of anti-Portuguese guerrilla warfare in the 1960s to the civil war that divides the newly independent country today, has been on three sides.

Eleven years ago, when he was 18, Chinguar was kidnaped and forced to join UNITA while on a fishing trip in eastern Angola. UNITA was then fighting the Portuguese.

Two years later, in 1968, Chinguar tried to assassinate UNITA's guerrilla leader, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, while they were hiding in a patch of forest from a Portuguese army patrol.

"I tried to kill Savimbi with three shots," Chinguar said, "but at that time I was poorly prepared politically. We had been attacked that day by the Portuguese and I thought that Savimbi was making us die and suffer in the bush for nothing. Later I was taught we were fighting for our freedom."

Savimbi forgave him, Chinguar said, and told him he was a product of Portuguese colonialism. Given lengthy lectures on African nationalism, he proved an ardent student and, by 1973, rose to the rank of captain, then one of the highest ranks within UNITA.

On November 2, 1973, however, Chinguar ran away from the UNITA areas and presented himself to the Portuguese colonial administrators in Luso. "I was fed up and tired of life in the bush," he said. "It was too hard, and many of us were being killed by the Portuguese."

The Portuguese used him, he said, "to go around in the forest and find out where the UNITA bases were. Then they would launch an offensive. No, I didn't care. They told me the UNITA people were bandits and terrorists and I was doing the right thing."

He also worked as a bartender for the Portuguese soldiers.

After the Portuguese agreed to grant Angola its independence, Chinguar returned to Huambo, his hometown, where he opened a food shop with money his father lent him, he said.

"All [three] liberation movements were holding daily rallies in Huambo," Chinguar continued.

"I used to attend the UNITA rallies, but I didn't join," Chinguar said. "I was ashamed. I had failed as a revolutionary."

After the Popular Movement won the opening rounds of the civil war, Chinguar joined that movement. "I was a member . . . so I could get things for my shop. It was very difficult to get food because there was only enough food for the government and Cuban soldiers."

"I never told them I had been a member of UNITA because I was afraid I would have been killed," he said. In August 1976 he began to work for the Popular Movement's secret police. "I did it to protect myself. I didn't want the soldiers to come to my shop and take things."

Three men he knew from his days as a guerrilla were working in Huambo as clandestine UNITA saboteurs. "I turned them in to the police," he said. "Two of them were later released and one of them was never heard from again."

In September, the Popular Movement soldiers came to his shop and at gunpoint took his car, $750 in cash and all his merchandise, he said. He then moved to Santo Armaro, a small town six miles east of Huambo, and opened a new shop. Periodically, he said, he would go into Huambo to buy things for his shop.

On his last trip to Huambo, he was captured by armed UNITA guerrillas. "I was staying at a friend's house in Chiva," a slum area on the eastern outskirts of Huambo, he said. "It was January 19. About 10 p.m., the UNITA

guerrillas knocked on the door and called me out. I didn't try to run. I knew why they had come."

"There were eight of them," he recalled. "They said I was an mbofo [informer], tied my hands behind me and walked me out of the city," Chinguar said. Twelve days later, traveling by foot, Chinguar arrived at the prison in the forest of southern Bie Province.

"Savimbi told me I will be excused," Chinguar said. "I will now try to correct my mistakes and work hard for the party, if they will let me."

As Chinguar climbed back down into the hole, my interpreter, guerrilla private George Pinto Chikoti, turned to me and said, "This man has no consciousness. He is dangerous and should be shot.

"Savimbi said he should be forgiven, but we soldiers are against it," Chikoti continued. "I can understand him making two mistakes, but after that it is not easy to forgive."

EAST OF BAILUNDO, Angola -- several thousand peasants stretched out behind us, gaily singing songs and clapping their hands rhythmically while keeping up with the guerrillas' brisk pace down the dusty red-dirt road.

Young children ran through the bushes bordering the road laughing and giggling. The rains had suddenly stopped in the first two weeks of February, and a long, reddish dust cloud hung in the still air behind us, twisting left and right as it followed our meandering path.

On the crest of a slight rise of green pasture ahead of us sat the village. Its squat, rectangular white-washed mud huts with corrugated-iron roofs were brightly visible through the maze of towering eucalyptus trees.

A narrow rutted path branched off from the right side of the road and ran up into the village. Both sides

of the path were lined with villagers who broke out into song and drumming when we came into sight around a bend in the road.

This was the beginning of one of the large and numerous rallies held by the civilian supporters of UNITA, which is fighting against the Communist-oriented government of this country.

Here in mid-February, the war seemed far away.

In the small depression where the path began stood men and boys dressed in drab, tattered trousers and dark jackets. Some of the men puffed on long iron-stem pipes, which glittered like tiny reflectors in the bright sunlight. The village men, who traditionally greet visitors first, stood apart from the women.

Along the path beyond the men were the women and girls, wearing shiny, colored head scarves, dresses and blouses. Their shrill voices overrode the deep male baritones. Unlike the stoic men, the women danced and jigged to the time of the music, creating a rainbow collage of moving color.

Carvalho Ephrai stepped out from the crowd of men as we turned onto the path. Guerrilla Maj. Arao Chingufo and Ephrai hugged each other warmly in a traditional greeting. The music and singing suddenly stopped. Maj. Chingufo turned and introduced me to Ephrai, a traditional soba, or chief and contemporary political leader of this village and two others like it.

Ephrai and Chingufo turned and walked up the path together. The drumming and the singing resumed. We followed the two men. The women brushed our shoulders with leafy branches, another traditional greeting.

Walking side-by-side through the throng, were customary soba Ephrai and twentieth-century guerrilla Chingufo -- contrasts that had blended.

The chief, 50, his full head of white hair highlighting his regal bearing, would stiffly acknowledge

the crowd's cheers and shouted comments with a slight bow of the head. An illiterate peasant, his head was filled with the oral lore of the Ovimbundu covering history, legends, spirits, witchcraft, property rights and criminal law. He was the final mediator in any dispute.

The guerrilla, 28, exuberant and informal, would plunge into the excited crowd to shake hands with a friend long missed, banter with a pretty girl and continually adjust the 10-pound captured Kalashnikov assault rifle dangling from his left shoulder.

A high-school graduate in a land where more than 90 percent of the population is illerate, his head was filled with thoughts of nationalism, anticommunism, war, and the political necessity of keeping the peasants' support. He was the contemporary warrior.

We walked to a large grove of leafy trees in the village center, where the shade offered a cooling relief from the midday heat. The crowd, which had swelled to about 5,000 persons, sorted itself into different groups by sex and age -- male elders, young married men, boys, women and girls.

Ephrai, whose duties include being president of the UNITA peasant assembly in his three villages, stepped to the center of the encircling crowd and raised his right arm for silence.

A young guerrilla captain began to pace around the inner edges of the crowd. He began to hum a traditional chant in a low voice that gradually built up to a falsetto. He reviewed the history of the Ovimbundu. The men in the crowd punctuated his pauses with a deep humming bass and the women with a high trilling.

Soba Ephrai looked on approvingly, dabbing his moist eyes occasionally with a soiled handkerchief. Masked and costumed traditional dancers jumped into the center of the circle and danced to the drummers beat. These dances were banned by the Portuguese authorities.

The chant was followed by four hours of speeches,

songs and more chants. Guerrilla officers and civilian leaders, male and female, made speeches covering the 400-year history of Portuguese rule, its end in 1974, the beginning of the civil war in 1975, and the present conflict.

"We talk a lot because that is our way," said Soba Ephrai during a relaxed moment after the rally ended. "It is the way we pass on information from father to son to grandson. It has always been this way with the Ovimbundu."

The overwhelming majority of African societies had no written language until they were colonized. The UNITA guerrillas understand the importance of oral tradition. They use it and follow tribal customs while proselytizing among the many ethnic groups of Angola, of which the Ovimbundu are the largest -- almost 2 million people.

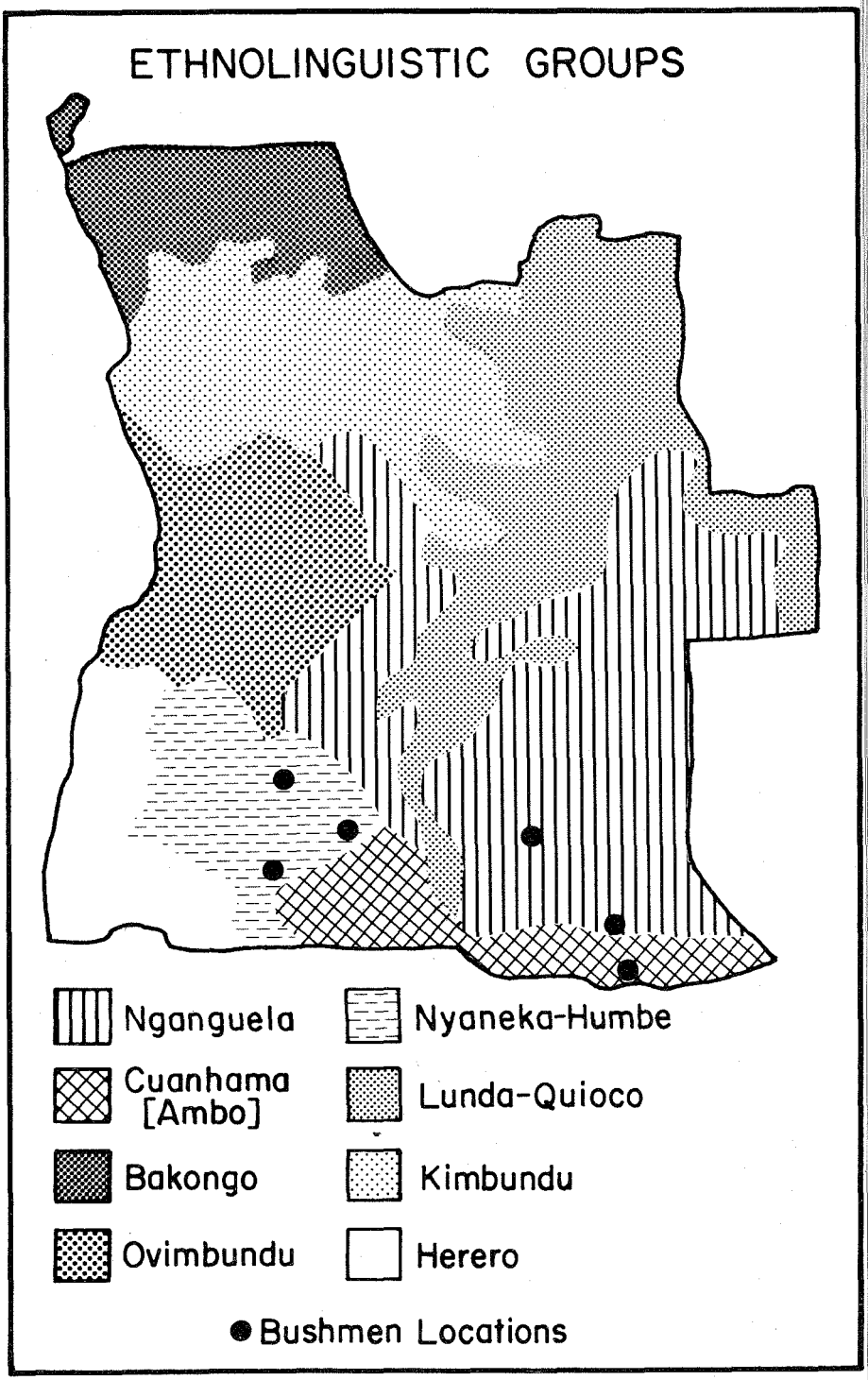
Much of the UNITA guerrillas' success in garnering the support of a large number of peasants of southern Angola, where half of the country's more than 5 million population lives, grew out of their ability to meld strong tribal traditions with their modern-day struggle. This approach evolved from trial and error during the eight years, from 1966 to 1974, they spent in the bush of southeastern Angola fighting the Portuguese.

"True, tribalism is divisionism," said UNITA guerrilla leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, who like Soba Ephrai is Ovimbundee, "but tribal structure is the life-blood of Africa. You can draw from this structure the will and support of the people."

Savimbi told me when he is trying to convert a new tribe to his cause he will send in tribesmen who are already in UNITA.

"These men already know their customs, how they look at the world outside their tribe, how to approach the chiefs and elders who wield tremendous influence in traditional tribal societies," he said.

"When you don't follow this procedure you make costly mistakes," continued Savimbi, following with an anecdote to buttress his point.


ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS
Nganguela
Nyaneka-Humbe
Cuanhama [Ambo]
Lunda-Quioco
Bakongo
Kimbundu
Ovimbundu
Herero
Bushmen Locations

In the 1950s, the Portuguese colonial administrators ordered the proud cattle-raising Cuanhama people, who live in the area of southern Angola bordering on Namibia, to cut their cattle's weighty horns to improve meat production. "What the Portuguese did not understand," Savimbi said, "is that the Cuanhama measure each cow's worth by the length of its horns."

The Cuanhama thought the Portuguese wanted to "steal the cattle's worth by cutting the horns. They rebelled. Many people were killed on both sides and the Portuguese didn't find out until afterward why they had rebelled," Savimbi said. "We don't make those kinds of mistakes."

After winning a tribe over, Savimbi said, "we then start the long process of nationalization. It requires a lot of patience and hours, days, weeks, months of endless discussions and meetings. You are trying to get a man to switch from thinking of himself as a Cuanhama to thinking of himself first as an Angolan. It's very complicated."

Savimbi personally teaches a month-long course to his guerrillas in political organization and Angolan culture. Graduates of the course, called political commissars, are given a diploma and sent out from military camps to peasant villages.

George Pinto Chikoti, 22, took the course in February, but did not graduate. "I did well, but [Savimbi] said I was too young. Not everyone who takes the course passes, and I'll probably take it again," he said.

"The main things Savimbi taught us were Angolan culture, social life and how to create a government of the majority black peasants to rule the country," Chikoti said. "He had to teach culture because it is very common for us not to know our culture," added Chikoti, who grew up for 14 years as a refugee in neighboring Zambia.

When he goes to an Ovimbundu village, Chikoti said, he learned "I cannot contact the chief directly. I speak to an elder man first who will either contact the soba himself or send a messenger. Then I wait to be called," he said. "This is the traditional method of showing respect."

"Most of the peasants do not like whites and do not understand the Cubans' Spanish," said Chikoti of the 15,000-odd Cuban army forces supporting the Angolan government. "We use this in our discussions also."

There are differing levels of understanding, said Chikoti. "The peasants who were with UNITA during the colonial war have a basis in nationalism, but the majority, the ones who came in after it ended, are still tribalists."

"I joined UNITA after 1974," the year of independence, said Soba Ephrai, "because Savimbi has been here during the suffering and understands what we need." "The suffering" is the phrase Angolan peasants use to describe the 13 years of colonial warfare that preceded independence.

During the height of the civil war that followed Angola's hastily granted independence, the Cubans came to Ephrai's village in search of UNITA guerrillas.

"It was in February 1976," said Ephrai. "They told us they wanted to catch Savimbi and 'for now, we don't want anything to do with you,'" Ephrai said. "They did nothing.

"We are not happy seeing a white man staying," Ephrai said. "We remembered the Portuguese when we saw [the Cubans].

"Yes, I noticed some black Cubans, the mesticos," he added. "But they were understanding [the language of the white Cubans], so they are one people."

Emilio Ndombe Ciguaki is one of three paramount chiefs of the Ovimbundu, the tribe's highest-ranking traditional political position. He was elected in 1968. I was able to see the almost fearful reverence in which Ciguaki is held by UNITA guerrillas and civilians alike.

Everyone stands a long distance away from him, until he with a slight nod, indicates that they may approach within speaking distance. I was able to interview him for only a few minutes as the Ovimbundu interpreter, Gilbert Chikoti, a UNITA guerrilla, became very nervous translating

my questions. "You can't ask him so many questions," Chikoti snapped. "Not of him. It's disrespectful!" he said.

"I support UNITA because Savimbi is the only man who can understnad the Ovimbundu's suffering" under colonial rule, paramount chief Ciguaki said. Angolan President Agostinho Neto "is Angolan, but he stayed a long time in Europe and married a white woman and doesn't care or know about the Ovimbundu's life. He's a Kimbundu," the chief said.

Angola's Marxist president, Neto, has branded the UNITA guerrillas "racists" and "tribalists," has created a multiracial government that includes as cabinet-level civil administrators a large number of Portuguese whites and Angolan mulattos. Both groups are highly educated miniorities within the country.

"We are neither 'racists' nor 'tribalists,'" UNITA leader Savimbi responded. "We are African nationalists. We want the majority to rule this country.

"Neto has appointed [Portuguese] Antonio Jacinto as the minister of education," Savimbi sputtered angrily. "What is the contribution of this man to African culture? This is a crime. We must cut the Portuguese culture out of Angola and return to our culture as blacks. There must be no compromise on this question in education."

Guerrilla Gina Chinosole, 20, is a political commissar who also makes much of Agostinho Neto's personal life when speaking at peasant rallies. An even 6 feet tall, her height is a rarity among both sexes in Angola.

When speaking, she uses an African walking stick, which by custom is carried only by men in Angola. A German Walther handgun hangs from a military web belt around her narrow waist.

While making a point, she walks right up to the Angolan men in her audience and looks directly down into their eyes. "I use everything I can to get across my point." Chinosole said after one rally. "The gun, the

walking stick, are all props. The men aren't offended because they know I'm a guerrilla. I'm supposed to be tough, so I act tough."

"Agostinho Neto is married to a Portuguese woman and wants to help Portuguese people more than black people," is how she started a speech the day before Christmas in western Bie Province.

"Neto is rich, and all rich people don't know how poor people are suffering," Chinsole continued. "If Neto had good people in his government all of your children standing here would be studying and have good clothes. You are not, because he has Portuguese in his government. We are not near to independence."

She also addressed the divided support the UNITA guerrillas received from the peasants. "Recently, at Chingote, one informer caused the death of many people because he told the government soldiers UNITA held a rally there," she said.

"At this village, I know there are informers and their work results in soldiers coming here and killing the people, whether they are informers or not."

Then she related an Angolan fable about a rabbit who wanted to marry a bear's daughter. The bear told the rabbit that the only man his daughter would be allowed to marry was one who could build a house in one day. The rabbit then called all of his look-alike relatives -- careful to let the bear see only one at a time -- who rapidly helped the suitor build the house. The bear gave his daughter to the rabbit.

At the end of the proverb, the 400 civilians applauded. "When we work together, "Chinosole continued, "things that seem impossible can be possible. We must remember this and apply it concretely."

Fables, she said later, are the easiest tools to get the peasants' attention. "From childhood on up," she said, "everything is taught traditionally in stories. Each animal has a characteristic. The rabbit is always wise and

the bear slow-witted. If you don't know the fables, you can't reach the peasants."

Soba Chillivela N'Dala, who has been a UNITA sympathizer since 1970, when he began living in the bush with the guerrillas, is head of six villages where 312 people live. N'Dala says he is first an Angolan, then of the Ganguella tribe and, finally, a Baptist. "In that order," he said.

"Savimbi teaches us that we are Angolans," N'Dala said, "from Cabinda to Cunene." Cabinda is the oil-rich Angolan enclave north of the country and the Cunene River runs along the southern Angolan border with Namibia. "I learned that from him and I believe it."

N'Dala said he has no qualms about supporting UNITA through the current civil war with the Popular Movement government. "I lived through the war against the Kaputo and I will live through this one," he said. "Kaputo" is a derogatory name for the Portuguese.

But he does not have universal agreement from the people in his villages. "Some of them are tired of the war and some have left to live in the towns with the government," he said. "They left when they were given blankets, salt and sugar by the soldiers.

"I understand," N'Dala said. "The life we live in the forest is very difficult. We have no medicine for the sick children. Our wives who are pregnant receive no medical treatment. We cannot get new clothes.

"But most of us believe there is only one way to follow, only one movement for the liberation of Angola," he said fervently, "and that is UNITA. It is the only movement I know. We believe God and Savimbi will give us independence."

BIE PROVINCE, Angola -- The two elderly women, their faces swollen from beatings, were pulled and shoved along by a group of seven irate elderly men until they stopped in front of startled guerrilla, Capt. N'Dala Domingos Tchiang.

An adolescent stepped from behind the group and walked up to Tchiang beaming a triumphant smile. The youth announced, "These two women are ongangas (witchdoctors). They have hexed my father. We want you to try them."

Tchiang, an urbane high-school graduate, was obviously uncomfortable in his role of judge in a witch-craft trial. He was uncertain whether he believed in witchcraft. Also, he is a Gangula, all of the people involved were Ovimbundu, and he was not sure he knew all the Ovimbundu rules covering witchcraft.

As an officer in UNITA, however, he was looked upon as a leader, both in the traditional sense as a soba chief, and in the more contemporary sense as a guerrilla warrior. The situation was made the more awkward by my presence, a representative of the Western press who, he assumed rightly, did not believe in witchcraft.

Tchiang ordered the two women to sit with their backs to him, facing their accusers. He then asked the youth's father to tell him how he had been hexed, occasionally bending forward and asking the two women to be quiet. The two women wailed loudly and denied the accusations after each of the elderly men's sentences.

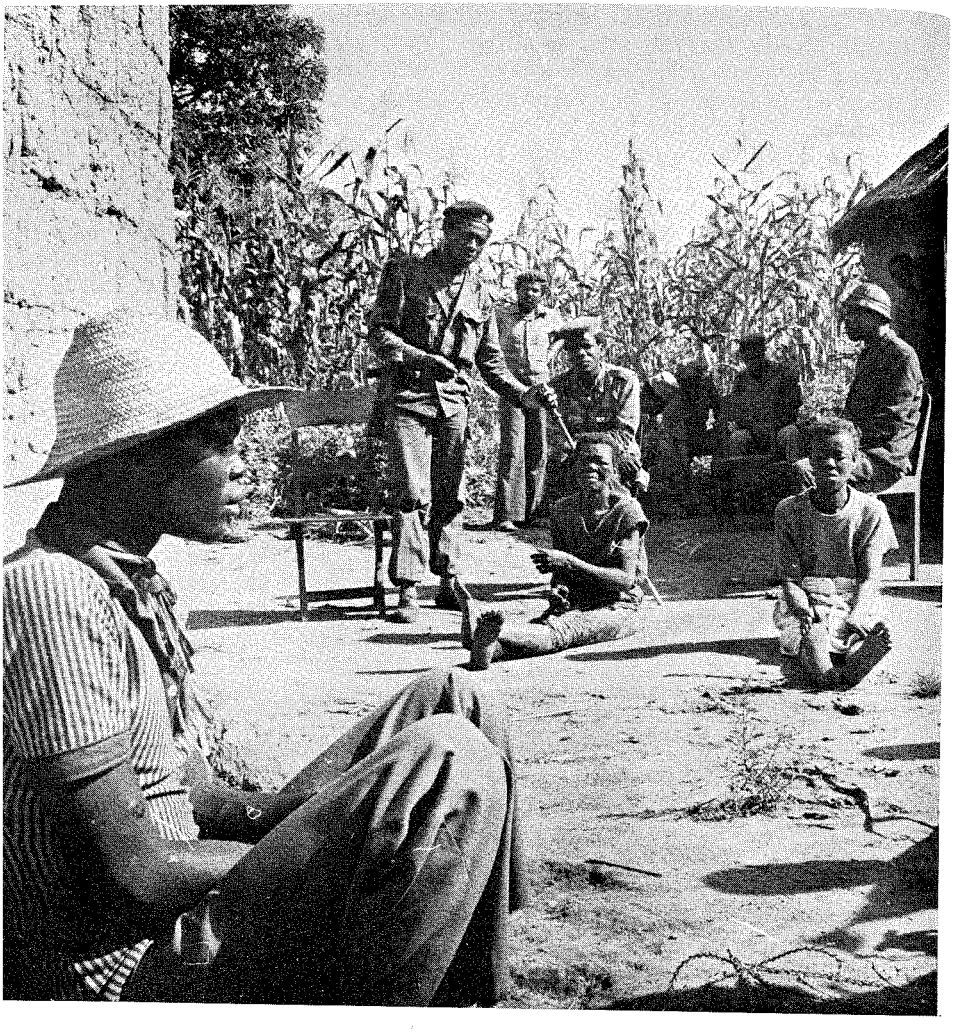
Several days before, the father began, his goat had eaten some of the women's corn.

The women shouted that most of their corn was eaten.

The man continued that the two women demanded that he pay and threatened him with a hex when he refused.

The women cried that they had only demanded payment.

Four years before, the man continued, his son had suffered a swollen leg after crossing the women's farm. He



Two women accused of witchcraft sit in front of Capt. N'Dala Chiang as he addresses peasants, including one in the foreground who said they had been hexed.

believed, he said, that they had hexed his son for crossing their land. "Lies, lies!" the two women shouted in unison.

The day before he had brought them to Tchiang, he said, he had seen one of the women muttering an oath and throwing handfuls of dirt towards his house. That night he had suffered neck pains.

All of this had taken 45 minutes to tell, and Tchiang had thought himself out of this dilemma. He stood and told the man that he owed the women payment for their corn. He then turned a stern eye on the youth and told him he should be in the guerrilla army instead of "fooling around in such matters."

Finally, he told the other elderly men, the ones who had beaten the women, that he had no authority in matters of witchcraft and that such matters should be taken to the local chief. "I am a guerrilla," Tchiang told them. "I do not understand these things and I don't want to be involved in them."

He then ordered the two women released. The two women jumped up and walked hurriedly away, laughing and joking as they looked back over their shoulders at the crestfallen elders. The youth and his father, looking rather sheepish, followed the elders in the opposite direction.

"Most of the peasants in Angola believe in witchcraft," said Tchiang as he watched the men walk away. "My parents do, but I don't know if I do."

Soba Mutemba is a member of the Luimbi tribe, the president of a UNITA assembly of three villages and the traditional chief of his village near the Cuanza River. For more than a year and a half, the UNITA guerrillas have been trying to persuade him to move his villages away from the river and from a wide dirt road along side them.

"They are too close to the road and if the soldiers come, you will be killed," said guerrilla Maj. Eugenio Ngolo.

Part of the strategy of the UNITA guerrillas is to move peasant villagers away from areas where they can easily be approached by government forces and induced to switch their allegiance. The guerrillas also claim that government troops come to villages to kill young men who could be recruited into the guerrilla forces and to rape the young women.

"I am aware of all that," said Mutemba to Maj. Ngolo, "but only a little of that has happened at my villages. It is very difficult to move a village," Mutemba continued.

Mutemba said both Cuban and government soldiers have come to his village periodically. "They left us alone, but they killed about 20 people from other villages. I don't know why. They took some girls with them and killed their husbands."

"We now see that they kill people, so we will run away if they come again," Mutemba continued. Asked by Ngolo why he did not move the village now, Mutemba responded, "To change the village has many problems. It is necessary to build new houses."

Ngolo told him that was not the reason he was refusing to move.

"Well," Mutemba added, "the grounds far from the village are not as fertile as the ones near the village. We would not be able to grow much."

Ngolo still insisted that that was not the reason he refused to move.

"The history and traditions of the village make it difficult to move," Mutemba continued. "The old people in the village have great, great grandfathers who founded the village. They will not leave."

Ngolo told Mutemba that as soba he had the authority to overrule the elders in matters that affect the whole village.

"All of the people in the other villages near the Benguela railroad have not moved, so we are not moving also," retorted Mutemba. "Living near the railroad is just as dangerous as living near the road."

Exasperated, Ngolo gave up his sixth attempt to try to persuade Mutemba to move his villages. Mutemba, who had been visiting Ngolo in his forest base, smiled, shook Ngolo's hand and moved off.

"The real reason he won't move," said Ngolo, "is because the spirits of the dead ancestors live in the villages' trees and rocks. They protect the villagers from harm. They won't move unless something major happens.

"That is why we like it when the government troops come and kill some of them," Ngolo continued. "Only then will they move. Force them to move ourselves? Can't do it. Then we become the enemy. He can tell the government where our bases are."

BIE PROVINCE, Angola -- Fair-skinned guerrilla Lt. Jose Candido Pimentel grew up as an outcast from the privileged minority caste of Angolan mesticos, the Portuguese term for offspring of black and white parents, because he was raised by his African mother.

In the rigid and, at one time, legally imposed Portuguese colonial social structure of caste, class, race and color, Pimentel, 32, said he was raised among his peasant mother's Kamusumbi people as a tribesman, but was rejected by town-dwelling mesticos as "an uncivilized black."

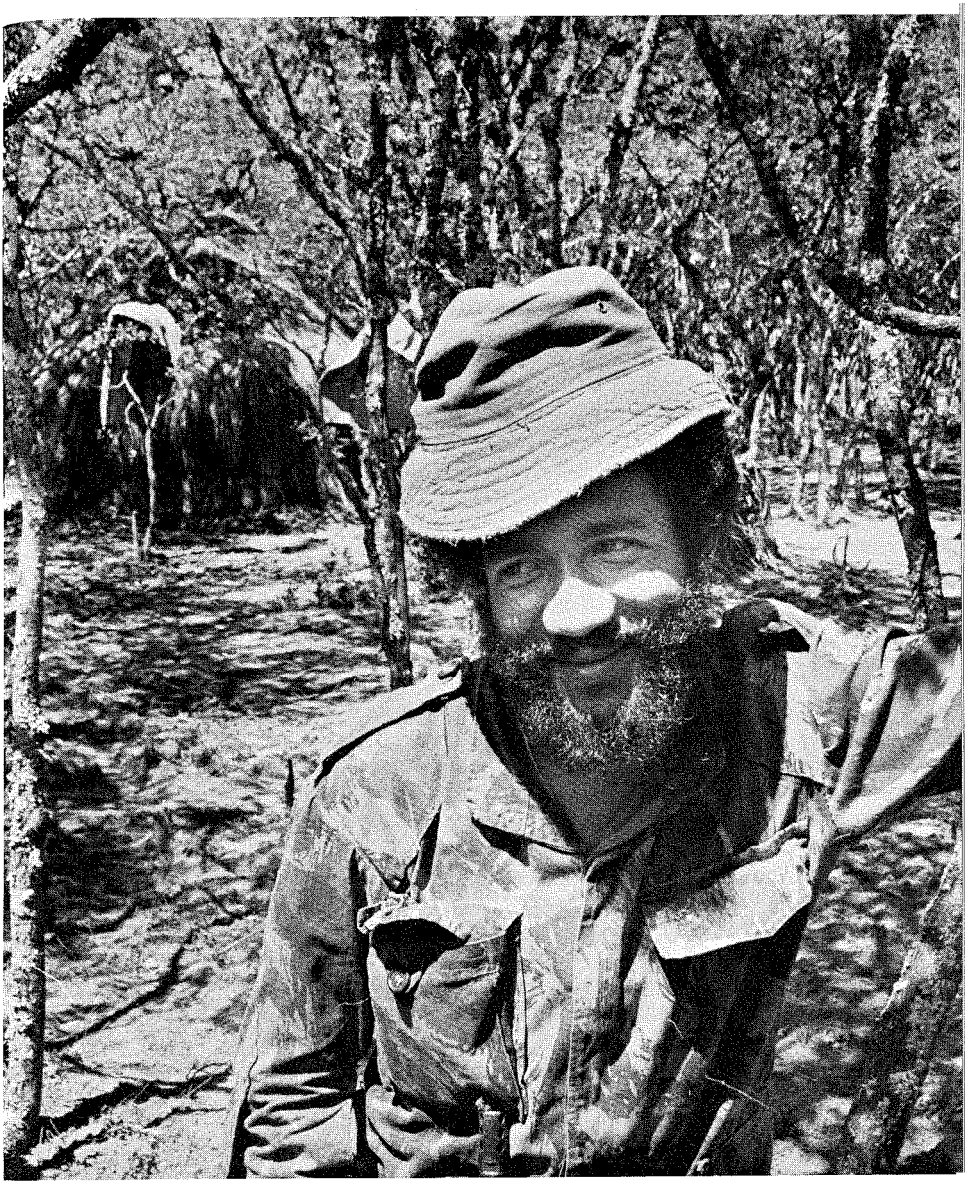
Their exclusion of him, he said, shaped his contempt for the urban elite of his mestico caste, led to strong emotional bonds with his mother's people, influenced his decision to join guerrilla forces fighting the newly independent Angolan government and caused an irreversible split with two of his brothers. They are popular military commanders in the government's army.

"My Portuguese father, Candido Pimentel, deserted us when I was five," Pimentel said bitterly, "and from that time our life was hard," growing up in the rural outskirts of Gabela. There were 11 children, six older black children from my mother's previous marriage and five young mestico children, including himself, from the period that his Portuguese father began to visit his mother, he said.

Pimentel, whom I interviewed just before beginning the last leg of my journey with the UNITA guerrillas, said that caste, class, race and color were important elements of Angolan colonial society. These distinctions have contributed to the fighting in independent Angola today, he said.

Pimentel was one of several mesticos, who make up about 10 percent of the UNITA forces, I interviewed about their positions in Angolan society. He was the only one, however, who did not become nervous and evasive about the issue of the mulattos.

We became friendly during a week I spent recovering from crippling foot sores that had developed after the removal of 22 bitacaia parasites from the soles of my feet over a three-day period.



Guerrilla Lt. Candido Pimental. Born of mixed blood, but regarded as black because of his upbringing.

The bitacaia, much like American chiggers, burrow into your feet unnoticed and then grow painfully large. They must be dug out, either with the pointed end of a safety needle, knife or sharp stick, before they lay enormous quantity of eggs. The eggs cause your feet to rot.

While I was recuperating, Pimentel would stop by my hut in the mornings when he was relieved of all-night guard duty on the outskirts of the Bie Province guerrilla camp we were in. He started our first conversation with a description of how he had been jailed and demoted from lieutenant after badly beating a Portuguese UNITA captain, who had been fighting alongside the guerrillas in the early stages of the civil war.

"He was always disappearing when the fighting started," Pimentel said. "After one fight, I was just angry and beat him and beat him. The soldiers didn't stop me. They agreed with me."

Pimentel was jailed for a month and broken to private. After his release from jail, he rose back up to lieutenant. "The captain ran away to the government's side," said Pimentel. "He's just like all the Portuguese. A lot of talk and no work."

A subsequent conversation shifted to his role as a mestico. "I am more African than I am mestico because of the way I grew up," he said. "I grew up very poor with my mother's Kamusumbi tribe, which made me different from most mesticos.

"The mesticos who live in the town of Gabela considered us village mesticos as blacks because we were poor and weren't as educated as they were. They treated us and the blacks worse than the Portuguese colonialists did. The whites paid higher salaries than they did and treated the blacks better."

Until 1961, when Pimentel turned 16, Angolan colonial society was divided into four major castes whose relative positions were regulated by racial laws of economic segregation. In September of that year, the laws were abolished, about six months after anti-Portuguese guerrilla

warfare had broken out among a small proportion of Angola's majority African population.

At the top of the caste system were the whites, the Portuguese civil administrators and settlers who numbered about half a million by 1975.

Directly under them were the 90,000 mesticos, 90 percent of whom, the town-dwellers, were granted automatic citizenship because they were "partly white." The remaining 10 percent, like Pimentel, were raised in African villages. They had to apply for citizenship after proving that they could read and write Portuguese.

The mesticos were further refined socially into six categories of genetic admixture, with the lighter-skinned ones being more acceptable than darker-skinned ones.

Pimentel is considered a mulatto, the child of one black parent and one white parent. "Half-and-half," he self-consciously laughed.

The other five categories are cabrito, the child of a mulatto and a white; preto fulo, a child of a mulatto and a black; auro-Africano (gold African), a child of a cabrito and a white; caboclo, a copper-colored mestico with straight hair; and cabroche, a dark-skinned mestico.

The African population was divided into two classes, assimilado and indigena. The assimilados ("assimilateds") were granted citizenship after shedding their African language and culture and completely adopting Portuguese language and culture. The indigenas ("natives"), who were and still are more than 90 percent of the African peasant population, were those who remained "uncivilized."

These ethnic and class cleavages still split Angola, a country already divided by eight major, generally mutually antagonistic tribal groupings. The tribes were never able to combine effectively against their colonial masters, although they rebelled separately at different times. The tribal divisions helped the Portuguese maintain their 400-year rule.

At the end of May this year, a black-nationalist faction within the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola tried to overthrow the country's Marxist president, Agostinho Neto, partly because of the large number of mesticos and Portuguese whites in the top ranks of the government and party.

It was the fourth time since the 1960s that a black-nationalist faction within the movement has tried to topple Neto over that issue. Neto is an assimilado who is married to a white woman, writes poetry in Portuguese and advocates a multiracial society for Angola.

In a country where tribal allegiance comes first, the attempted overthrow bodes ill for the beleagured Neto and illustrates the depth of racial feeling among the black population.

The leaders of the coup attempt were former Interior Minister Nito Alves and the former chief of political commissars of the armed forces, Jose Van Junen -- both of whom are members of Neto's tribe, the Kimbundu. They had been considered staunch supporters of the Popular Movement government.

Reportedly, white and black Cuban soldiers (the latter considered mesticos in the Angolan context) helped Angolian soldiers loyal to Neto's pud down the coup attempt. Neto's reliance on Cuban support against his own former followers could lead to further divisions in an already fractured country.

"The laws were changed, but nothing else changed," said Pimentel about colonial Angola in the 1960s. "The people didn't change and the poor weren't allowed to do anything but pay taxes after they sold the little they grew on their farms.

"The African indigenas who couldn't afford to pay the taxes were sent to the coffee plantations of the Portuguese to work until their taxes were paid," he added. "They didn't have a choice."

The top levels of white-collar employment were

reserved for the whites, middle-level managerial jobs were occupied by mesticos and the lowest levels for black assimilados, he said.

At the age of nine, Pimentel said, he was enrolled in primary school and managed, with the support of his mother's assimilado brother, to graduate from high school in 1966. "I was 21 years old, but still very stupid," he said.

At first, Pimentel thought he had finally become a member of the urban mestico elite. "But they would always ask me where I was from, where was my father and then turn up their nose when I told them," he said.

Over the next nine years, through a series of jobs, an enjoyable stint in the Portuguese army, several racial incidents and a trip to segregationist South Africa, Pimentel became more and more disenchanted with Angolan society.

For a year Pimentel taught at a high school in Cela. "I wanted to get away from Gabela so people would stop asking me about my background," he said.

At the Cela high school, he formed a close friendship with the only assimilado on the staff, Henrique Valssanha. "I was the only mestico, the rest of the teachers were Portuguese," he said.

One May night in 1967, Pimentel and Valssanha attended the town dance at the prep school. "We were invited because we were schoolteachers."

Valssanha brought a white girlfriend with him. This precipitated a racial incident, and both nonwhite teachers were beaten. "The Portuguese were always telling us they were not racists," Pimentel said, "but they are. There was no justice under them."

Pimentel said the girl's father slapped her, and when the black Valssanha tried to intervene, the father and his friends began to beat him. Pimentel then jumped into the fray and was also beaten, almost losing his left eye, he said.

The municipal judge dismissed charges that Pimentel and Valssanh brought against the girl's father and friends.

"He told us we were both no good drunken blacks who were creating confusion with good Portuguese people," Pimentel recalled angrily. "From that time I was very disgusted with everything. I quit teaching and went to Malange to work as a mechanic."

In November, the Portuguese secret police arrested him. "The liberation war was on and two of my brothers had joined the Popular Movement in Congo-Brazzaville," he said.

Off and on for three months, Pimentel said, he was interrogated by the police about the whereabouts of his brothers. "I really didn't know then, so I couldn't tell them," he said.

In January 1968, the police ordered him to join the army. He was put into an elite counter-insurgency commando company. "We were trained for nine months by South African, French and American officers."

"I knew I was going to fight my brothers, but I felt I would be killed by the Portuguese if I didn't," he said. "I said to myself, 'In order not to die, I must do it.'"

One of the brothers, Henrique Pimentel, 26, is also a mestico. The other, a half-brother, Bernardo Narcisco, 49, is black, he said.

"The distance between us was great," Pimentel continued. "Even Bernardo did not tell Henrique where they were going when he took him to Brazzaville. Bernardo was afraid Henrique might tell the Portuguese secret police because [Henrique] is mestico."

Pimentel was in the Portuguese army for three years, fighting against the National Front in the north and UNITA in the east. "I killed many guerrillas and I enjoyed it," he said.

After army service in 1971, Pimentel got a job as a truck driver with a diamond mining company owned by American, Belgian, British and South African interests.

Before civil war erupted two years ago, diamond exports were Angola's third-largest foreign revenue earner, after petroleum and coffee.

The following year, Pimentel said, he was sent to Johannesburg, South Africa, for 15 days to pick up heavy-duty mining machines and drive them back to Angola. "A company official warned me before I left not to be surprised by the situation there, but I liked it and I enjoyed myself," he said.

"At night, I stayed in the hotel for mesticos and blacks," Pimentel said. "The blacks there were living better than we were here, even if they were oppressed. There they had shops, large farms, hotels and their own cars.

"Here, in Angola, these things were only for the Portuguese," he said, "and the middle-class mesticos."

On April 25, 1974, Portugal's army overthrew the country's political dictatorship after growing tired of 13 years of war against guerrillas in its three African colonies, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Angola. The Portuguese colonial empire quickly began to unravel.

"My two brothers returned to Luanda in September," Pimentel said, "and I met them there. I was driving seven days a week, earning $375 a year. They told me 'Slavery is over,' so I quit and joined the Popular Movement."

The Portuguese army allowed the three guerrilla movements to campaign throughout Angola for elections scheduled for October 1975. The elections, to be followed by independence on November 11, were never held.

"I began to notice there were a lot of rich mesticos in the Popular Movement and a lot of mesticos who had been in the commandos with me," Pimentel said. "I didn't like them. They were abusing the blacks and robbing from the people."

He left Luanda with his two brothers and went back to Melange. "I wasn't doing much, just eating and drinking whiskey on the Popular Movement's money."

UNITA Maj. Mateus Katalayo arrived in Melange shortly after he did, Pimentel said, and began to hold rallies to drum up support for UNITA. "I saw they were really interested in the peasants and poor of Angola. I joined UNITA in May [1975] and showed my brothers my card."

His older brother, Bernard, the black half-brother, told him he had made a mistake. The Popular Movement "is the movement for mesticos, Pimentel said Bernard told him. His younger brother Henrique, the mestico, "would walk out of my mother's house when I came there. He refused to eat with me or talk to me."

By June of that year, the tension between UNITA and the Popular Movement began to mount. "The National Front and the Popular Movement were already fighting," he said. "Many of the UNITA soldiers were helping the National Front soldiers without their officers

In the same month, one of his sisters got married. "I was drinking with Henrique and Bernardo and then we started discussing politics." he said. "We argued and threw the safeties off our rifles, but my mother stepped between us, and the argument ended."

Bernard came to him after the wedding and tried to persuade him to return to the Popular Movement, Pimentel said. "I refused. He said, 'Well, now we must separate because the war will soon begin in earnest.'"

A month later, the Popular Movement soldiers were chased from Melange by National Front soldiers, Pimentel said, and the UNITA forces were ordered to evacuate the town and move south to Massinde.

Before the evacuation began, Pimentel said, he went to his mother's house to get her, his wife and two sons. "They were gone," he said sadly. "My brothers left a message that if I wanted my family I would have to rejoin the Popular Movement or leave them and stay with UNITA.

"My younger brother had told me before, 'When the war begins between the Popular Movement and UNITA, my first bullet is for you.'"

Since then, Pimentel has continued to fight as a UNITA guerrilla.

"My brothers are now commanders in the Popular Movement army," Pimentel said. "Sometimes I hear their names mentioned on the government's radio. They must be popular. I will kill them if I see them."

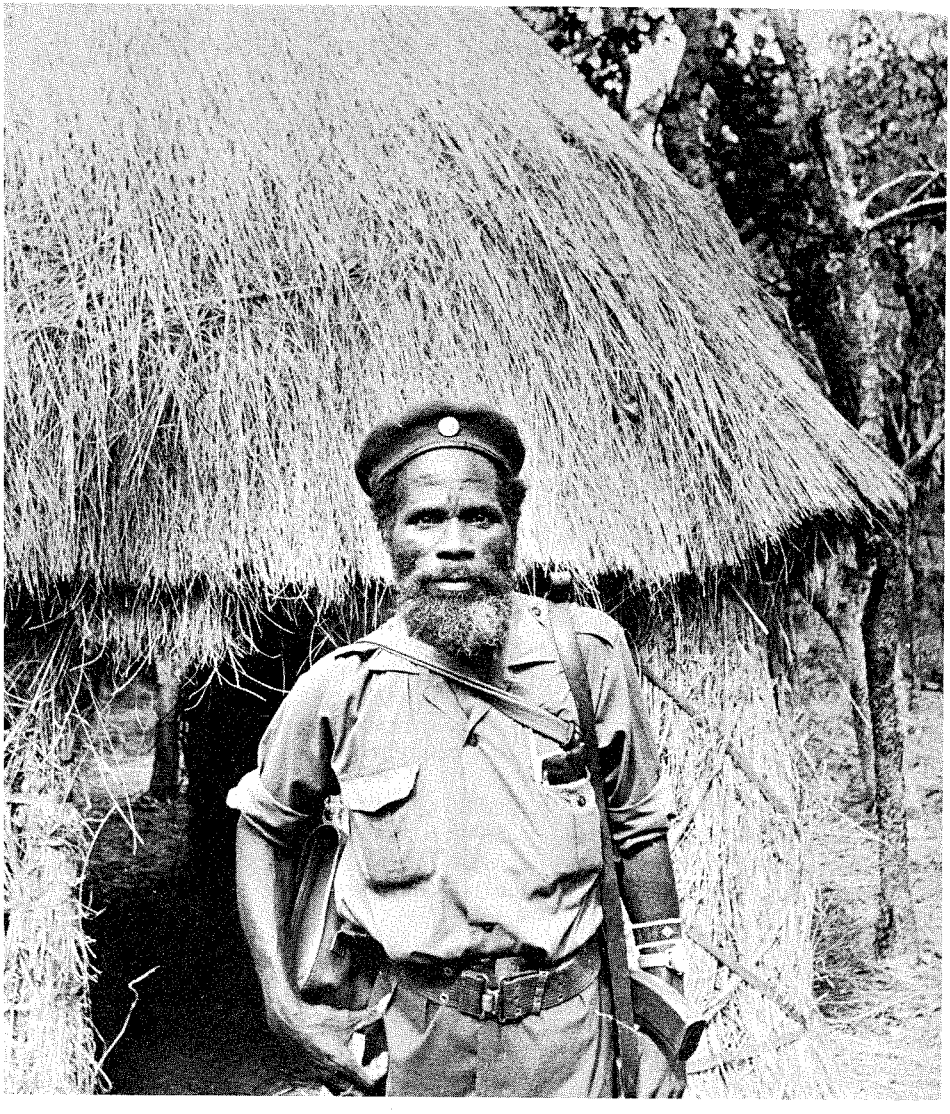
BIE PROVINCE, Angola -- Lt. Col. Antunes Cahale, 54, who sprays the wounded bodies of all enemy soldiers with gunfire to insure that they are dead, still harbors a strong anti-white bitterness that developed while he was growing up in colonial Angola.

Initally rejected for entrance into the colonial African elite status of assimilado "because my skin was too black," Cahale still recalls that 30-year-old memory with tears in his eyes. It was the hate and resentment of that rejection, he said, that led him to join the UNITA guerrillas in 1965 when they were fighting against Angola's Portuguese colonizers.

Cahale was born January 3, 1923, at the Chilesso Evangelical Mission station in Bie Province, the son of peasants. "My parents were classified as indigenas, the legislated African class that had no rights of citizenship in Portuguese Angola," he said.

"Our lives were miserable," he said. "We were very poor."

At an early age Cahale began to attend the Chilesso Mission's elementary school with the idea of moving out of the indigena class. "I went to that school because the Portuguese schools were not open to Africans of any class," he said. "Only the missionaries had schools for Africans."



Lt. Col. Antunes Cahale

In 1942 he began teaching in the lower primary school grades while he was still studying. "To get an assimilado card you had to prove you could read, write and speak Portuguese fluently," he said, "I was determined to get one."

Five years later, Cahale was the second-grade teacher to guerrilla leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, whom he would later follow when he joined UNITA.

"At night all the students had to study by a fire together, and Savimbi would break the school's rules and bring food with him to eat," Cahale recalled fondly. "When a teacher came he would hide the food or run away, but he was a good student."

That same year, he said, he went to the Portuguese colonial administrator, Joao do Carmo Reis, of Andulo, to apply for assimilado status.

"I will always remember his name," Cahale said. "He told me I was too black to be an assimilado. That it was only for mesticos," those of mixed white and African ancestry.

Afterward, Cahale said, he began to hate the Portuguese. "I felt it was not necessary for us to learn to read or write because they were lying about treating us equally if we did," he said.

"I wanted to be an assimilado because the life was easier," he said. "I could avoid the high income tax the indigenas had to pay, and it would be easier for me to buy things and travel in the country."

With a letter from the missionaries at Chilesso, Cahale went to the Portuguese administrator of Massinde and managed to get an assimilado card several months later.

"Reis was angry when I returned," Cahale said. "He told me now that I was an assimilado I must never eat, drink or be friendly with the black indigenas, including my parents. But I was still considered an indigena wherever I went. The Portuguese couldn't believe I had qualified as an assimilado. They said I was too black."

Joao de la Abeimo is a 47-year-old Portuguese who lives with his black Ovimbundu wife and seven mestico children in the UNITA occupied areas of Huambo Province.

"I am not black, but I am Angolan" said Abeimo, who migrated to Angola from Portugal in 1958 at 28. "I was a house-builder, but I only had a third-grade education. There was no work for poor people in Portugal, so I came here to make my fortune."

The first town he settled in was Mungo, where he continued to build houses. Then he went to work as a chauffeur and, finally, became a shopkeeper. When it first became clear in 1974 that Angola was heading for independence, Abeimo said, he knew he would stay.

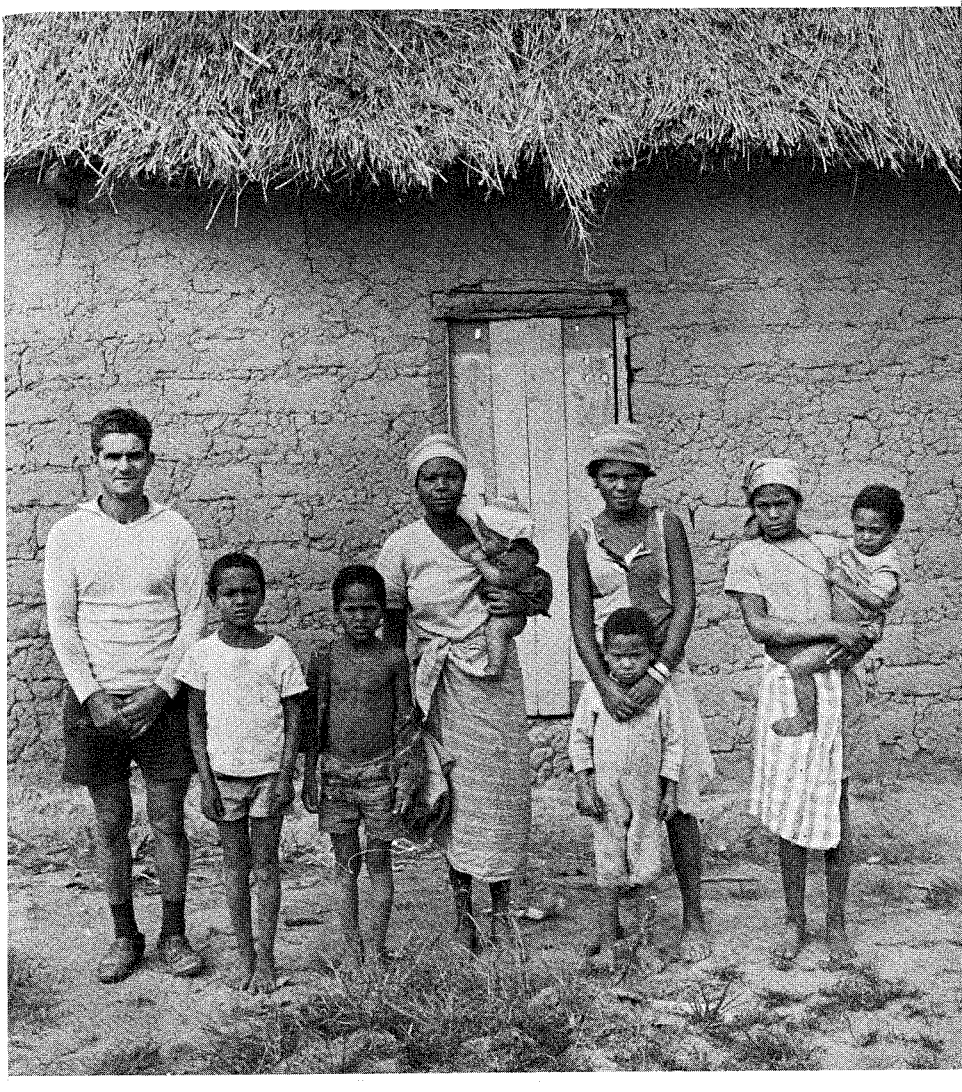
"I thought I would stay here permanently because I am an Angolan, my wife is an Angolan and my children are Angolans," Abeimo continued. "I was not afraid. I never had problems with the African population and I felt I would stay until independence.

"I became a UNITA follower because it had the most followers in this area. I rejected the Popular Movement because I don't like their ideas that everything belongs to the people, even my things."

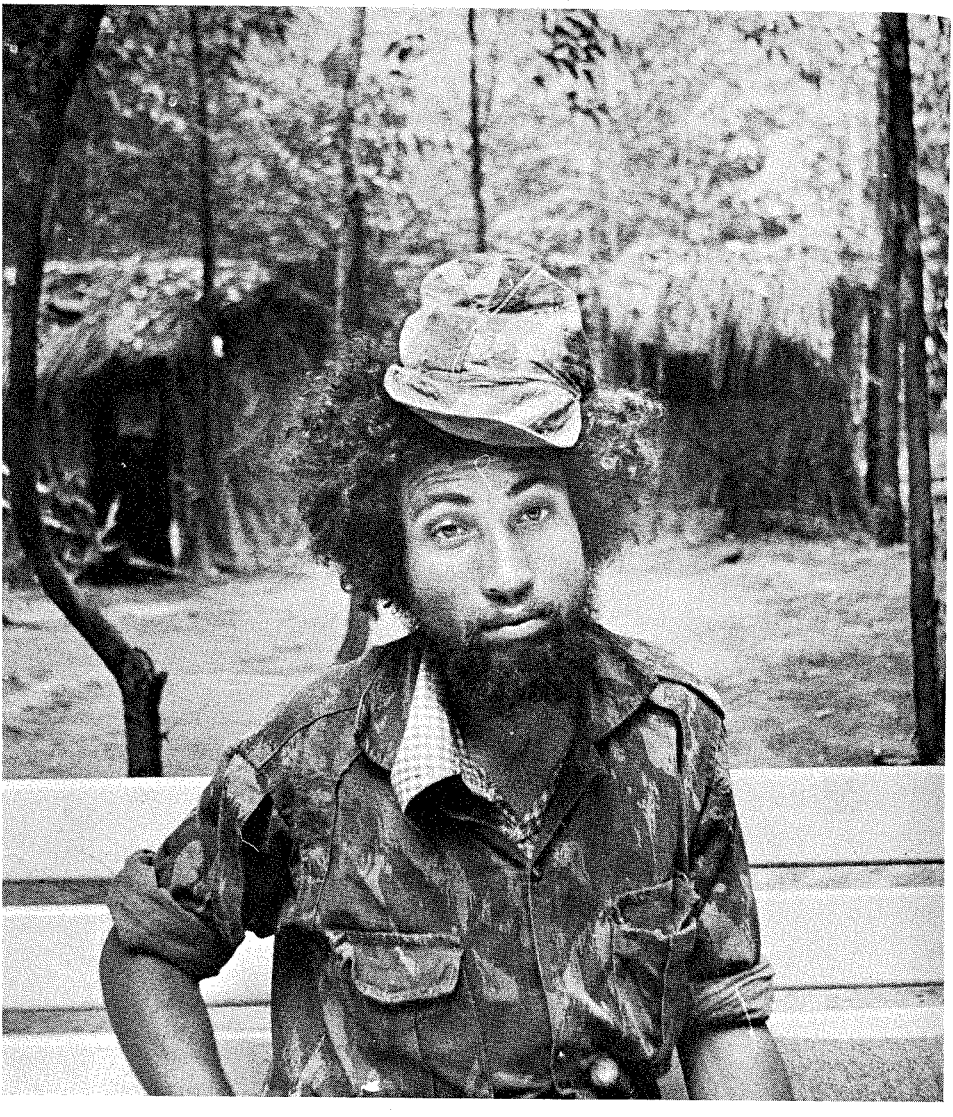
On November 24, 1976, Abeimo said, Popular Movement soldiers came to his shop in Cassenji. "They told me I would have to move to Bela Vista [a town on the Benguela railroad] because they were taking all the Portuguese there. I refused, and then they stole all the things in my shop."

The same day, Abeimo said, he moved out to the countryside to seek protection from the UNITA guerrillas. "Now I am a farmer," he said. "If I am to die, I prefer to die here."

Jose Antonio Casimiro, an Angolan-born Portuguese UNITA guerrilla, said he is fighting "to defend my country against Russian imperialism. I can say that because I was born here twenty-five years ago. I am Angolan."



Joao de la Abeimo and family



Jose Antonio Casimiro

Casimiro said he was born in Lepi, a village on the Benguela railroad. His immigrant Portuguese father and Angolan-born Portuguese mother are both dead.

"I speak better Ovimbundu than some of the Ovimbundu assimilados," he said, in reference to the dominant tribe in the area where he grew up. "My father was a Portuguese peasant who ran the butcher shop in Longonjo village. All of my friends were Ovimbundu, and I joined UNITA when they did, -- on October 2, 1974."

From December 1975 to December 1976, Casimiro was hospitalized at the Dondi Mission Hospital recuperating from leg wounds received during fighting in Luso against government forces.

"The government soldiers used to come to the hospital sometimes to see if there were any UNITA guerrillas there," he laughed, "but they never thought I was a UNITA guerrilla."

"I can continue fighting until I die," Casimiro said. "The government is made up of black Portuguese," he sneered. "I am a white Angolan."

HUAMBO PROVINCE, Angola -- For three hours, 530 military and civilian delegates sat in drizzling rain on hard log benches, cheering from time to time the speeches of the three UNITA guerrilla leaders on the opening day of their fourth congress.

The next day, March 24, in Luanda -- Angola's capital, 400 miles northwest of the hidden forest where the congress was held, -- Fidel Castro was lying wreaths on the graves of Angolan and Cuban soldiers who died fighting over the past two years.

Castro had been welcomed by Agostinho Neto, president of the People's Republic of Angola -- which, reportedly, also has some 500 Soviet advisers.

In separate hour-long speeches, the three UNITA

leaders spoke, in ascending order of rank, about why they are fighting and touched on their internal problems.

"Today," said Commander General Samuel Chiwale, the lowest-ranking of the three, "everyone in the bush, soldiers and civilians, are fighting Neto's friends, the Cubans, so everything will be better for black Angolans. Neto must die."

Secretary General Miguel N'Zau Puna followed Chiwale with an admonition to the delegates: "The person here who doesn't understand that UNITA is fighting for the black Angolan is a traitor. We must be honest in this congress so the road will be clear for battle. We must also fight tribalism, regionalism and alcoholism."

Then UNITA's leader, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, spoke on the theme that Angola, having gotten rid of its Portuguese colonizers, was saddled with others -- the Soviets.

"We must not be colonized again," said Savimbi. "The Portuguese, who knew all the ways of the people, went out, and do you think Neto, who is also Portuguese, can win this war? The Russians are using Neto and the Cubans to rule Angola. They must be defeated!"

The tone for the five-day congress was set -- an unyielding commitment to war and a candid appraisal of their own weaknesses.

As part of this appraisal, the UNITA guerrillas decided on a major change in battle tactics by planning to create a three-battalion semi-regular army. The semi-regular force, unlike the present hit-and-run guerrilla force, would be used to hold strategic locations for psychological effect.

Besides warfare a central theme of the congress was black nationalism -- rejecting the Neto government's multiracial ideal in favor of black rule for black Angola.

As an expression of that stance, the delegates adopted the slogan Negritude. A 40-year-old word coined

Miguel Puna, secretary general of UNITA, addresses delegates to the Fourth Congress, where the guerrilla force agreed on a major strategy change.

by black intellectuals under French colonial rule, Negritude is an assertion of black cultural consciousness.

Angola's President Neto, who wants to include Portuguese whites in the new Angola, has called UNITA's black nationalism "racist" dogma.

This division over racial philosophy adds a new source of division in a strife-torn country already split along tribal and ideological lines.

The UNITA guerrillas and their leadership also reflect the factionalism that impedes this country's growth to nationhood. Although Angola inherited national boundaries, most of its diverse African population has no concept of nationalism, thanks in part to the Portuguese colonizers.

During the 7 1/2 months I lived and traveled with the UNITA guerrillas inside Angola, I had a rare opportunity to study close-up one side of this war and the deep-rooted animosities that could keep the embers of conflict alive indefinitely.

"The biggest happiness of my life," said UNITA leader Savimbi to the delegates, "is to fight for this country and die for this country. Only with blood can we make our own history."

Savimbi's opening speech was not all inspirational cries for self-sacrifice, however. He also castigated the delegates for practices that he felt weakened the UNITA guerrillas' efforts.

"You people," said Savimbi, pointing to the civilian delegates who made up two-thirds of the congress, "when you see something wrong among the soldiers, you are afraid to go to the [guerrilla] commander and tell him because you think he will kill you and throw you in a river. He will not kill you. You must not be afraid to talk to the commanders when they are wrong."

In a revealing reference to the aid UNITA received from the South Africans, Savimbi said: "Some people are

saying, 'Why don't the South Africans come and fight for us, so we will pay them later?' That is wrong. If they fight for you, you will be colonized again. You must fight for yourself."

At that point, Savimbi's speech was interrupted by chanting from the delegates. "SA-VIM-BI, SA-VIM-BI," they chanted in unison with equal emphasis on each syllable.

Then the delegates sang religious hymns followed by prayers by a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest, both Angolan. Both clergymen sanctioned the war against the Popular Movement government "in the name of God." About half the peasants who support UNITA are Christians. The rest follow traditional African animist religions, the belief that all natural phenomena have souls.

"All [religions] are needed in UNITA under a common roof to fight for a free Angola," said Savimbi when he resumed his speech. Savimbi's late father, Lote, was a Protestant pastor.

Savimbi condemned "anti-intellectualism" among his guerrilla and peasant followers. "This thing about who is intellectual and who is not intellectual is unnecessary. Fighting is thinking, and we need intellectuals to think."

"I was a peasant like my mother," said Savimbi. "We have all suffered a peasant past." Savimbi left his doctorate studies at the University of Lausanne in 1961, a year from completion to join the anti-Portuguese colonial war.

It was noon when Savimbi finally ended his hour-long speech, in Portuguese and Ovimbundu. A chilling drizzle had ended and welcome sunshine began to peek through the cloud cover.

Savimbi, Puna and Chiwale filed out in the order of their rank in UNITA, through the milling delegates in the grass-walled amphitheater. The leaders' 20 young bodyguards made a path for them.

The delegates quickly followed their exit, flowing out of the amphitheater to communal kitchens for a quick lunch of boiled corn and broiled beef before regrouping in committee meetings.

"Now the work begins and we won't have to listen to any more hymns," Maj. Mateus Katalayo said cynically. He acted as my interpreter during the congress.

The congress was broken up into four study committees -- Strategy and Tactics, the Masses, Administration, and Conflicts. I was allowed to attend the deliberations of three of the committees. The exception was Strategy and Tactics.

Savimbi, who chaired the forbidden committee, responded smilingly but negatively to my appeal to lift the ban: "We are discussing the lifeblood of UNITA, our future tactics as a guerrilla movement. The officers would be intimidated if you attended, and they don't want you to attend."

The rest of the congress was wide open for inspection. At the third UNITA congress, in 1973 -- which I attended -- 70 percent of the proceedings were closed to me, as I noted in the articles I wrote then. The ban was now down to a quarter of the proceedings.

My cynical interpreter, Maj. Katalayo, seemed to sum up the perceptions of many of the UNITA guerrillas I had met on both trips. We were sitting outside his grass lean-to, sharing a bowl of boiled rice and dried salt fish.

"Whose side are you on in this war?" he suddenly asked as I gulped a ball of overboiled rice. "Neutral," I sputtered. Katalayo looked away from me and off into the distance without saying anything, a general reaction among UNITA guerrillas when they hear something they dislike.

After several mouthfuls of food, he looked at me again and said, "Leon Dash, I like. But Leon Dash, the journalist, I don't know if I like. You are two people. There is one side of you I can't measure, and I don't like that. It leaves me -- how do you Americans say it? -- 'uptight.'" Katalayo learned his English during 18 months

in a Zambian jail. He had been arrested when UNITA was expelled from Zambia in 1967.

The congress was overcrowded with 1,600 arms-bearing guerrillas, peasant delegates and their families, who had traveled from seven Angolan provinces -- Moxico, Bie, Huambo, Cuanza Sul, Malange, Huila and Cuando Cubango.

Many had traveled by foot for six weeks over hundreds of miles and across rivers swollen by the heavy March rains. They arrived footsore and exhausted. Some were sick when they arrived and had to recuperate during the entire congress. Others, who had heard the congress was being held and had decided to come without being invited, were turned back after traveling for weeks. The uninvited were turned back, Savimbi said, because the site was already overcrowded, which created a sanitation problem.

The footpaths between the huts were churned into a muddy morass by the first day. By the third day, the outskirts of the campsite was an obstacle course of feces. The stench, in the oppressive humidity, rose daily over the site with the rising sun.

Katalayo cursed in Portuguese as the stench swept over us on our way to a meeting of committee on the masses. "Many of our soldiers and most of the peasants don't know anything about hygiene," he complained. "That's just one of the areas we have to work on."

The Masses meeting, chaired by Commander General Chiwale, was the largest committee, with about 200 military and civilian delegates. When we entered, Chiwale asked Katalayo what I was doing there.

"This espiao has been given permission to attend the meeting," Katalayo said in Portuguese with a straight face. Chiwale laughed hard in his deep bass voice. "What the hell is an espiao?" I asked. "A spy," Katalayo answered.

Chiwale good-naturedly waved us to one of the log benches, still wet from that morning's rain, and we sat as an officer was translating opening statements for the Chokwe

delegates. Besides Chokwe, all of the congress' proceedings were painstakingly translated from Portuguese into the Ovimbundu and Cuanhama languages.

"Most of the peasants understand Portuguese poorly or not at all," said Katalayo, "but most understand one of the three Angolan languages, even if they are not from that tribe."

A civilian delegate, standing up to address his comments to Chiwale, criticized political organizers, called commissars, who prefer to work in their own tribal areas. He said however, that in some areas UNITA civilian assemblies, usually made up of four villages, did not want political commissars from other tribes.

Standing to respond, Chiwale angrily said, "This will not be tolerated. This is tribalism and we don't want it. The main problem between the political commissar and the masses is that when he arrives at a village he acts as if he is the god, the king." Loud applause erupted among the civilian delegates at this remark. "The people resent this and it gets translated into tribalism if he is from a different tribe. There is fault on both sides." The applause died.

"And you civilian leaders," Chiwale continued into the silence, "are to stop taking political and witchcraft problems to regional military leaders. You are abdicating your authority. The military men have too many problems with the war to solve yours also," he said. "From now on, I want you all to contact the political commissar in your region for problems. That is what he is there for."

The UNITA leadership's eclectic peasant socialism, "Democratic Centralism," was borrowed from Mao Tse-Tung while they were undergoing guerrilla training in Peking 12 years ago.

At the base of a pyramidal structure are large peasant organizations with elected officials who theoretically make their wishes known through political commissars. These, in turn, are to report up to the next level of authority, UNITA's 35-member Central Committee. As the

administrative body, it is chaired by Secretary General Puna, who chooses its members every four years at a congress.

The Central Committee reports to the policy-making body, the 19-member Political Bureau, chaired and chosen by UNITA's leader, Savimbi.

Policy decisions supposedly flow down from the Political Bureau to the Central Committee to the political commissars and, finally, to the political organizations.

Savimbi is also reconfirmed at each congress by secret ballot. The delegates placed slips of colored paper -- blue for a "yes" and white for "no" -- into a wicker basket carefully watched by armed guerrillas. At both congresses I attended, the vote for Savimbi was unanimous.

Katalayo and I left the Masses committee meeting after an hour and moved through the mud to the other side of the camp to the Conflicts committee.

"Theory and practice are always different," said Katalayo in response to a question about UNITA's political system. "The Political Bureau is supposed to assimilate and make policy from information that reaches it from the bottom. Some information never reaches it and some officials make their own policy."

The Conflict committee was the liveliest of the three I was allowed to attend. Guerrillas and civilians alike were venting long-standing grievances. Committee chairman Lt. Col. Antunes Cahale would wince every time he saw me bend down to take notes. He asked Katalayo several times if he was certain I had gotten permission from Savimbi to attend.

Cahale, at 54 the oldest guerrilla, "is not used to allowing journalists see our dirty linen," Katalayo explained. "He's from the old school."

A civilian assembly president rose and complained that too many guerrillas in the area "are drunk all the time. They're using the corn and sweet potatoes we give them to make [moonshine] when other [military] bases could use the food. This is a waste and it is also dangerous."

Cahale agreed. "When a soldier drinks we take a chance on his being caught by the soldiers or the Cubans and we lose a soldier and a gun," he said. "But the civilians drink too much also, and, if drunk, when [a civilian] is captured, he is more likely to think poorly and give away the location of a base. I want you sobas [chiefs] and presidents to be very tough on this problem. It is serious."

A guerrilla private said he had been trying to get married for more than a year. "We want freedom of marriage, but what type of freedom is it when one officer is marrying four or five women at a time and everyone keeps quiet?"

"And some officers," another soldier jumped up to add, "are sabotaging the efforts of the soldiers. When they see a soldier has a pretty girl, they have him transferred so they can steal the girl."

An elderly peasant man shouted, "And the girls want to marry only officers."

But a female guerrilla jumped up and told them all to "wait a minute. Not all the fault is on the side of the girls," she argued. "Sometimes a commander will talk to you and when you reject him because you don't like him, then he will accuse you of tribalism or indiscipline and have you beaten as well as persecute you."

A women peasant delegate added, "There is also a problem of classes. The girls want only boys who are educated," she said. "The [guerrillas] make the uneducated girls pregnant and leave them. This is not true love."

"Hasn't he heard enough?" the embarrassed Cahale asked Katalayo as more guerrillas and peasants, male and female, jumped from their seats to make their points. Katalayo told him I hadn't, and the discussion went on.

Four recording secretaries on Cahale's left dutifully noted each point to be presented to the closing session for further debate by all the delegates.

"What happens at the committee meetings isn't so secret," said Katalayo when we left much later. "It's just human."

At the Administration committee, Secretary General Puna was leading a calm discussion on the establishment of bush schools for children and adults. "We may be in the bush for a long time and we will need these schools," Puna told the hundred or so delegates, a quarter of them Christian clergymen.

A census would also have to be taken, said Puna, "so during a government offensive we will know how many people have been either captured or killed or have ran away. It is also a measure of our success to know the numbers of new persons leaving the towns and coming into the forest or UNITA-controlled villages."

Puna also told them to collect all the new currency, called kwanzas, the government had issued in January and forward it by courier to UNITA's central forest bases, where it would be turned over to him.

On April 14, Puna showed me a large pile of kwanzas the UNITA guerrillas and peasants had collected in a little more than three months.

"This amounts to 5 million kwanzas," he claimed. "We collect it, create a paper shortage of money, force the government to print more and then put what we have collected back into circulation. Inflation will follow."

The debates, arguments and discussions continued for four days. On March 27, during the evening meal, Katalayo and I were listening on a short-wave radio to the live speech by Castro in Luanda. Castro criticized both UNITA and the National Front for using "white mercenaries" at the start of the civil war.

"Who is he to talk about white mercenaries?" asked Katalayo angrily. "He's a white mercenary. He should take his soldiers out of here."

The next day, at the closing session of the congress, Savimbi mentioned Castro: "At this moment, Castro is visiting Angola to give moral support to his soldiers and we are meeting here to plan the next four years of fighting against the Cubans and the government.

"To win, we must be unified, and to be unified, we must resolve the criticisms which were raised in this congress," Savimbi said.

The delegates then passed a long list of resolutions, including:

Those exhibiting tribalist attitudes, guerrillas and civilians, were to be transfered from their home regions to other tribal regions.

Soldiers and civilians caught drunk would be jailed or beaten severely.

Boards of inquiry, made up of soldiers and peasants, would be established to resolve social conflicts in military camps and villages.

A civilian delegate asked if there would be any future coalitions with the National Front. In October 1975 UNITA and the National Front formed a coalition government and joined their military forces against the Popular Movement forces and the Cubans. The two allies fought each other as well as the combined Popular Movement-Cuban forces.

"All of the National Front forces ran away -- to Zaire," Puna told the delegates, adding that UNITA would be willing to make a pact with another group but not the National Front "because they are not fighting on Angolan soil. They ran away and left their Bakongo people without any support."

A resolution proposing a new coalition with the National Front was defeated overwhelmingly by voice vote.

After the list of resolutions was finished, Savimbi presented a surprise resolution by unrolling a cloth sign with black lettering in Portuguese declaring the UNITA-occupied areas to be the Black-African and Socialist Republic of Angola. The resolution and the name were unanimously accepted by the delegates with wild applause.

The major recommendation of the Strategy and Tactics committee, Savimbi announced, was the formation of a semi-regular army. "From this day, 70 percent of our time will


Savimbi holds up a new flag, labeling UNITA-occupied areas as the Black African and Socialist Republic of Angola.

be spent on the structure of the army," he said. "We must have a conventional army to fight the Cubans. It must be politicized, disciplined and well-structured to be able to defeat the Cuban enemy."

Later, Savimbi said privately, "I am pleased with our guerrilla operations so far, but the price has been too high. Too many men and officers have been killed when we attack the towns. Many of our guerrillas are just thrown together momentarily to attack a town and it is too uncoordinated, too undisciplined."

Savimbi claimed that he did not have a source for new weapons to arm his planned semi-regular army. "We have enough weapons now," he said, "the American machine guns, for example, to arm three battalions" of 500 men each.

"A guerrilla army itself cannot defeat a regular army," Savimbi continued, "The government is a puppet government of the Soviet Union and the Cubans, but it is an Angolan government. They will not give up, like the Portuguese."

Two months later, on May 22, I crossed the border into western Zambia escorted by UNITA Maj. Antonio Dembo. From there we entered a narrow log canoe and were poled for three mosquito-bitten nights and two broiling days down the Luanguinga River to Yuka in Zambia.

Dembo had left Angola to travel through Zambia to Zaire and reenter to help organize UNITA guerrillas among his Bakongo people in the coffee-growing north of Angola.

"We have guerrillas fighting there," he claimed, "but they have been acting without direction. Like bandits."

"My job will be to make sure none of the coffee crop leaves Angola," he said. "This is going to be a long war."

HUAMBO PROVINCE, Angola -- Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, 43, stood up dressed in a pressed camouflage uniform with a green silk ascot, the red beret pulled jauntily to the right matching the reddish gloss on his cordovan-colored boots.

"The country is living a moment of decision," his baritone voice boomed out to the 530 delegates at the UNITA congress, "and that is why you are here. To make decisions that will free our country from Soviet imperialism."

The delegates jumped to their feet and cheered widly for five minutes.

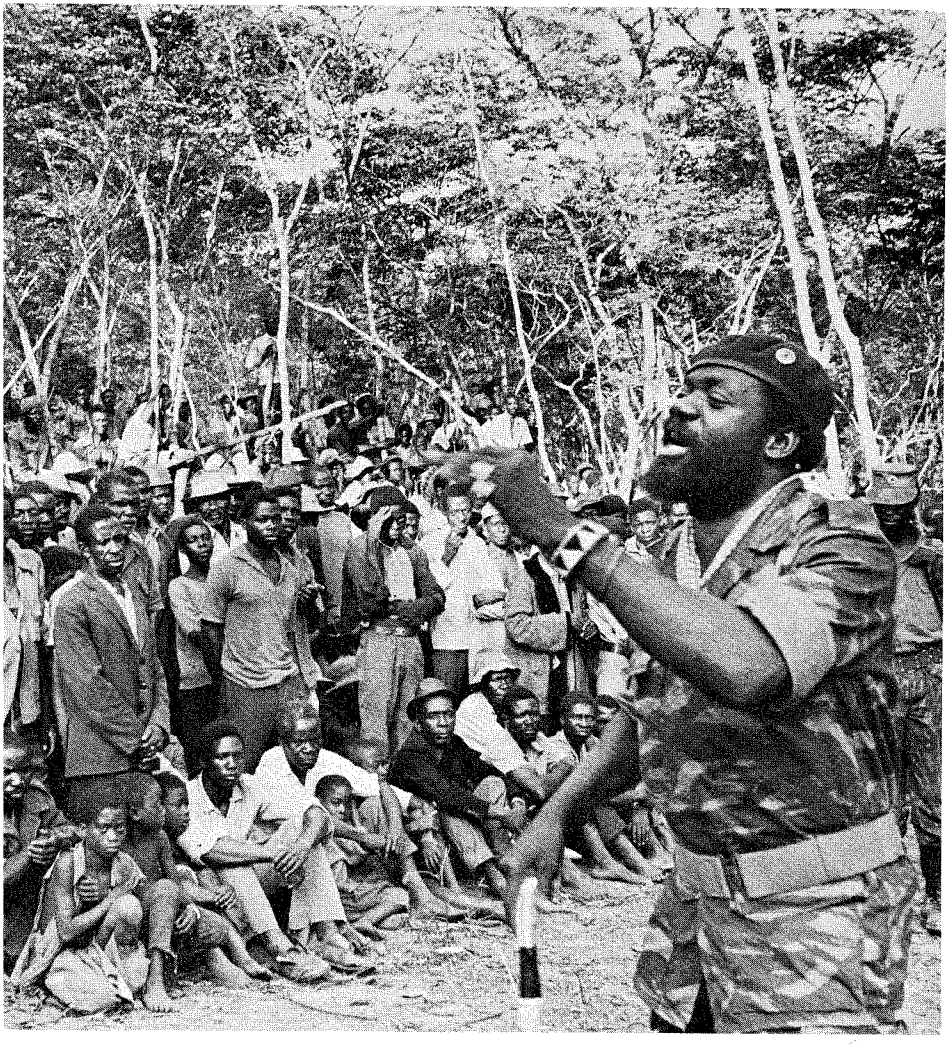
Stately and imperious, his left hand on his hip, he waited for the cheering to end. Seemingly, it did not matter what he said just as long as Savimbi spoke -- telling them what to do, how to do it and how long it would take. They would follow.

Savimbi, the founder of UNITA, has been its leader -- not without challenge -- since 1965. He is also the life-blood of the UNITA guerrillas' fight against Angola's Soviet and Cuban-supported government. Without him, it is questionable if they could continue.

"In African society it is the chief who leads the people," said UNITA guerrilla Capt. Jaka Jamba. "Savimbi is the chief. If he were killed, I don't know what would happen to UNITA."

Savimbi is an enigma, a man on whom many labels can stick -- brilliant, charismatic, affable, unyielding, forgiving, temporizing, Machiavellian, opportunistic, lying, nationalistic, Marxist, Maoist, pro-Western and socialist. He speaks Portuguese, French, English and several Angolan languages.

He is a member of Angola's largest tribe, the Ovimbundu. There has been at least one attempt, in 1968, to assassinate Savimbi -- by two Ovimbundu within the ranks of UNITA. On another occasion, a top UNITA leader of the Chokwe tribe tried to get his fellow Chokwes to overthrow Savimbi as UNITA's leader on false charges of tribalism.



UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi gestures as he speaks during a rally with a group of Angolan peasants.

Savimbi forgave all three men. Two of them are still in leadership positions within UNITA today. "He says he is a Marxist," guerrilla Maj. Mateus Katalayo said about Savimbi, "but he is a Christian."

Although Savimbi is seen by the outside world as a tribal leader, in point of fact his charisma does cross tribal lines and extends far beyond the Ovimbundu.

Although he claims to be an African nationalist, Savimbi lost his standing as a legitimate African leader in the eyes of most of Africa's leaders by collaborating with the South African armed forces at the height of the Angolan civil war.

Savimbi claims he was a victim of circumstances. "When the South Africans invaded Angola they dictated terms to me," he told me.

"We were too weak militarily to fight the government forces and their Cuban allies," he said. "We could not fight the South Africans, too. That would have been a ridiculous position."

Savimbi lied, denying that the South Africans were in Angola for 2 1/2 months after they had invaded. Reliable Western intelligence sources said that Savimbi invited the invasion meeting with the South Africans in Ruptu, Namibia, in early September 1975 -- a full month before the invasion.

Savimbi's dual political personality is also evident in the countries from which he managed to secure arms for his guerrillas -- 5,000 World War II American carbines from the Central Intelligence Agency and 500 Soviet AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifles from Romania.

"I was willing to take arms from anywhere," he said. "I made a mistake as far as the Americans were concerned. Our friends told us they would back us and they sent us old carbines . . . no good for this type of war. The soldiers use them for hunting food." Savimbi uses the expression "our friends" as a euphemism for the CIA.

"We thought Angola was of such interest to the West that they would stop the Russians," Savimbi continued. "We were mistaken and left in the cold. I now understand that the American government will help us if they see it as being in their strategic interests. I would not be surprised to see them recognize the [Popular Movement] government."

His experience with the CIA has not embittered him, Savimbi said. "I do not get frustrated with blows or conceited with victory," he said. "It does not help to have hatred or resentment. They are two bad emotions that will cut off the light to think clearly."

Savimbi said he favors a mixed economy of capitalism and socialism and described himself as a "moderate" socialist. "Nationalization would not be my ultimate nor immediate aim. Foreign companies will not bring the technical know-how to Angola without something in return. You must be honest with the company, however, and tell them that the wealth will be returned to the country."

Savimbi rejected the idea of seeking a reconciliation with Agostinho Neto, Angola's Marxist president, sputtering:

"Neto needs to reconcile himself with the nation and stop being a black Portuguese. He thinks Angola is where he is living in his palace in Luanda," Angola's capital. "He has never been in the shantytowns. He thinks Angola is downtown Luanda.

"We can think about making a reconciliation only when the Cubans and Russians are gone. Not before. No. Never.

"Neto said he is going to teach Marxist-Leninism in primary school here. He is a fanatic, a European colonizer. To bring Russian law here is another type of colonization. Marx must be kept in his place. We should take from Marx only that which applies to our situation."

Savimbi's UNITA guerrillas will continue to fight against the Cuban- and Soviet-supported government for the indefinite future, he said.

"The Cubans will not leave here because of pressure

from America or anyone else. They will leave here because Neto lied to them and told them he was the most popular. The Cubans are dying, so they now know that is not true. And if Castro leaves them here too long, they will become counter-revolutionaries when they return home," Savimbi said.

"The Russians mean business in Angola, and so do we. The Cubans are only the Russians' lackeys," he said.

"The Russians think they will expand throughout the South African subcontinent, but no one in the West will sacrifice South Africa. Not France, not Britain, not the American Republicans, not the American Democrats.

"None of them will sacrifice South Africa. Geopolitics will force them to come back to me."

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